

IDENTITY CRISIS: *SCRIPTAE PERSONAE* IN OVID'S *AMORES* 1.4 AND 2.5

BY

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## Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the multifaceted *personae* of Ovid's *Amores*, specifically in *Amores* 1.4 and 2.5. These *personae* range from Ovid as poet (*poeta*), lover (*amator*), and love teacher (*praeceptor amoris*); the poet's love interest, the *puella*; the rival, the *vir*; other unnamed rivals; and reader. I argue that Ovid complicates the roles of the *personae* in his poetry by means of subversion, inversion and amalgamation. Furthermore, I conclude that as readers, when we understand how these *personae* interact with each other and ourselves (as readers), we can better comprehend Ovid's poetry and quite possibly gain some insight into his other poetic works.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

~ *ars adeo latet arte sua*. ~ Met. 10.252

In his book *Arts of Love* (1993), Kennedy discusses the Pygmalion myth in the tenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:<sup>1</sup>

Pygmalion creates a statue; the story 'ends' with it becoming a 'real' woman. However, a sign 'stands' not for reality, but for another sign in a continuing chain of signification. A statue stands for the female body, but the female body is a signifier in its turn; and so on. It is the function and effect of rhetoric to efface itself, to dissolve the distinction between 'illusion' and 'reality' (*ars adeo latet arte sua*). The object of such rhetorical persuasion may be its exponent no less than its audience. Pygmalion's statue 'becomes' a 'real' woman; her 'reality' is beyond question because she 'represents' nothing beyond the fulfillment of his desire.

The same concept of a realistic yet illusive kind of character can also be seen (or rather, read about) in Ovid's *Amores*.<sup>2</sup> As a result of these illusive, realistic characters—or what I prefer to call *personae*—, Ovid is often judged (or even criticized)<sup>3</sup> as deceptive, parodic, and witty. The focus of this thesis is how these characteristics function and what that function suggests about Ovid's poetry. My primary texts will be *Amores* 1.4 and 2.5, using thorough studies of *personae* in this

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<sup>1</sup> Specifically found in lines 243-297 of Met. 10.

<sup>2</sup> I owe thanks to Tara Welch, Michael Shaw, and Pamela Gordon for their patience, profound insight, and supportive assessments that have helped make this thesis both comprehensible and knowledgeable.

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy (1993) 93 makes a good point, which can be applied to Ovid's critics: "Elegy is thus no less artificial and rule-bound a literary genre than Virgil's *Eclogues*, the only difference being that the literary genre in elegy wear city clothes and live in Rome whereas the characters in the *Eclogues* wear rustic clothes and live in the country, a theme Veyne then goes on to develop in his chapter 7." Katz (2009) 2 explains that up until the 1970s, many scholars viewed Ovid as a mere imitator of his elegiac predecessors and thus considered his use of "parody" and constant irony and humor to be deficiencies. However, Katz (2009) 2 includes that many scholars today see Ovid's elegiac lover as "complex, humorous, and irreverent—as a true *desultor amoris* whom the poet portrays as both the lover dominated by his *puella* and the dominating lover who shrewdly manipulates his beloved."

pair of poems,<sup>4</sup> I will argue that Ovid complicates the role and identity of the poet, rival, and *puella*, with the use of subversion, inversion, and amalgamation. His experimentation deals with the core characters that enable elegy, and as a result he is stretching traditional boundaries of elegy. In *Amores* 1.4 and 2.5, Ovid's *personae* of the frustrated lover and the learned *praeceptor amoris* contribute to the identity of the aspiring poet and depict change; Ovid shows that nothing is constant by showing that not even the role of the speaker (i.e., himself) is uncomplicated.

In Book 1, Ovid finds a lover, the elusive *puella*, whom he immediately introduces as unstable in her identity, but he does not reveal her name until the fifth poem. Moreover, she does not seem to be the main catalyst for his beginnings in elegy or always the main subject of interest, but she does continue to inspire him throughout *oeuvre*. Ovid's relationship with the nameless *puella* vacillates between love and hate, slave and master, teacher and student, and is presented through myths that subvert his authority as a lover, *praeceptor amoris*, and poet. To increase the instability of both Ovid and Corinna/*puella*, the poet emphasizes the need for a rival, whether this rival is the *puella's* *vir* in competition with the poet for the *puella's* affection, or whether the rival is the inquisitive reader, another third party in what should be a duo. Ovid's awareness of the rivalry posed even by the reader compels him to defend his status as poet. Although the presence of the third person is problematic to the narrator, it proves very much indispensable to Ovid's *Amores*.

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<sup>4</sup> General commentaries on selections from Ovid's *Amores* in Paul Allen Miller's *Latin Erotic Elegy: An Anthology and Reader* prove very helpful. For Book 1 of the *Amores*, J.C. McKeown provides insightful commentary. And Joan Booth's commentary on *Amores* 2 includes valuable analyses.

Continuing through Books 2 and 3, the poet experiments with the elements of this genre and love, and his attitude towards them changes. Therefore, these poems demonstrate an instability that takes the reader through a variety of Ovid's experiences, which are described by means of ambiguous language and (sometimes complex) literary allusions. This process of shifting identities affects Ovid, his rivals, Corinna, and above all, the reader.

In the first chapter, I discuss *Amores* 1.4, a poem which Miller plausibly argues to be "understudied"; he then lists sources to support this point:

McKeown (1989) lists a single article from 1966 in the bibliography of his recent commentary. A quick perusal of the past fifteen's year's of *L'année philologique* reveals only one article, published in 1994, while the most recent book-length study of the *Amores*, Boyd's *Ovid's Literary Loves* (1997), contains not a single reference to the poem. Greene's *Erotics of Domination* (1998) offers close readings of 1.1, 1.2 and 1.5, but passes over 1.4 in silence. This neglect is undeserved for a poem that, I believe, is crucial to our understanding of the collection as a whole. ... 1.4 represents the beginning of the sequence's narrative proper.<sup>5</sup>

In *Amores* 1.4, Ovid plays the *praeceptor amoris*. He teaches the *puella*, not yet named, how to deceive the likewise nameless *vir*. As a teacher of love, it is Ovid's responsibility to educate her in an art based on deceit. However thoroughly he might educate his lover, he cannot be guaranteed triumphant satisfaction. He molds the *puella*, but things go awry. He focuses on creating subtle gestures of their secret love, while at the same time he must suffer helplessly through the frustration of his inability to touch Corinna. We must not forget that Ovid has a rival and is trying to use these tools of deception to his advantage. His advice and deception turn out to be short-lived. At the end of the night, Ovid's mistress is shut in by her *vir* and is subdued to his will, much to Ovid's chagrin. The only lesson Ovid can offer then is

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<sup>5</sup> Miller (2004) 169.



that she continue to deny that her encounters with her *vir* ever took place.

In *Amores* 2.5, the situation does not improve and has in fact grown worse: Corinna uses the tricks she has learned against Ovid, who still appears to be powerless. And what is more, to Ovid's sad realization, she has learned a few new ones. Here, the poet again illustrates that the presence of a rival is crucial—this is what fires the ardor of the *servus amoris* in that the complication of a third person subverts Ovid's authority as teacher and lover. Even though the rival may not realize the importance of his presence, he continues to encourage Ovid's sneaky ways. Fundamentally, Ovid is suggesting that infidelity is what keeps the game of love appealing. Corinna and the *vir* are pawns; Ovid knows just how to move the pieces in order to make his victory all the more satisfying so that it contributes to his success as a poet. Not only does the presence of the *vir*, but even that of the reader, complicates the situation in each of these poems. For instance, Ovid says in 3.12 that now that everyone knows about Corinna through his poetry, he gets himself into trouble as a result. Ovid makes it known that he was aware of the reader's part.

### **I. *Personae* in Ovid**

In order to understand properly Ovid's use of *personae*, one must first know and assess them as they appear in the *Amores*.<sup>6</sup> According to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, *persona* is translated as “mask,” “character” or “personality.”<sup>7</sup> This word immediately evokes its dramatic origins. Literally, it is a mask through which you

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<sup>6</sup> Davis (1985) explores Ovid as an actor in the *Amores*, or more particularly, his multifaceted *persona*. Durling (1958) 157 notes that Ovid's poetry is a “self-dramatization of some kind.”

<sup>7</sup> OLD s.v. *persona* entries 1, 2, and 4.

speak on stage. And this is what Ovid does in his *Amores*. The amalgamations of these masks are what define Ovid's poetic identity. Roland states:

This technique of self-masking was perhaps easily enough recognized by an audience at a symposium, and even later readers of texts in antiquity had no serious problems of interpreting the use of the mask, as we shall see. It was left to readers and critics of the last century to «problematize» the use of the mask or *persona*, and for good reason: the *persona* became a prominent strategic device among modernist writers, for instance, Ezra Pound, who entitled a collection of his poems *Personae* (1926), and the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, whose very name (under which he never published), weirdly, means 'persona.' ... in literary contexts *persona* is used by the Romans to refer to both the 'person' who is imagined as speaking and to the writer. However disparate the characters of writer and speaker, nonetheless the Romans tended to believe that they could see through the mask: to parody theological terms, they detected only a distinction of a person, not a distinction of being.<sup>8</sup>

The concept of the *persona* is significant especially when we consider Ovid's denied allegations in his exilic poetry:<sup>9</sup>

*Ad leue rursus opus, iuuenalia carmina, ueni,  
et falso moui pectus amore meum.* 240

*Sed neque me nuptae didicerunt furta magistro,  
quodque parum nouit, nemo docere potest.  
Sic ego delicias et mollia carmina feci,  
strinxerit ut nomen fabula nulla meum.* 350  
*Nec quisquam est adeo media de plebe maritus,  
ut dubius uitio sit pater ille meo.  
Crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostro  
(uita uerecunda est, Musa iocosa mea)  
magnaue pars mendax operum est et ficta meorum:* 355  
*plus sibi permisit compositore suo.  
Nec liber indicium est animi, sed honesta uoluntas:  
plurima mulcendis auribus apta feres.*

I went back to songs of my youth, trivial work,  
and how I moved my soul with feigned love.

But no bride learned deception from my teaching,  
no one can teach what he barely knows.  
I produced pleasures and tender songs so  
that no tall-tale ever damage my name.  
There's no husband even among commoners,  
who is doubtful of his paternity because of my fault.  
Believe me, my character is quite different than my poetry,  
(my life is modest, my Muse is lighthearted)  
and a great deal of my work is deceitful and contrived:  
it permitted more than its author.

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<sup>8</sup> Roland (2003) 56 and 65, with the break at the ellipsis.

<sup>9</sup> *Tristia* 2.339-40 and 347-358 from Owen's (1991) OCT. This and all subsequent translations are my own.

A book's not evidence of a life, but an honorable compulsion:  
you will carry off many things fit to please the ear.

Though it may not have been specifically the *Amores* that landed him in exile, the *Tristia* still nonetheless provides some insight into the idea of Ovid's poetic *persona* in the *Amores*. Here we see a shift in the poet's attitude towards his earlier love poetry. The opinion that all of his love poetry (*Amores* especially, but also including *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*) is not a reflection of his own life may have been argued because he was in exile. However, there is a certain somberness to the *Tristia*; it lacks the playfulness that often pervades many of his earlier works.

*Ovid: poeta, amator, praeceptor amoris in the Amores*

In Books 1 and 2 of the *Amores*, Ovid as poet and lover expresses enthusiasm for the *puellae* of elegy. However, this enthusiasm is replaced with discontent in Book 3 and the audience can detect Ovid's pronounced detachment from elegy. Can the narrator or poet of the *Amores* be identified with the historical Ovid? Perhaps, but the line between historical and fictional Ovid is indiscernible. What I am interested in is not whether Ovid's genuine feelings can be seen in these poems, but rather how his *personae* and emotions are exaggerated.<sup>10</sup> Ovid may have been an aspiring poet (that is hard to deny knowing the great deal of poetry he produced—he was very prolific!), but was he a lover willing to commit adultery with married women as some might argue? Was he the tortured lover he so often described himself to be? Was he truly a

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<sup>10</sup> The idea of the *persona* should not be unfamiliar to us today. Many shows such as *Seinfeld*, the *George Lopez* show, and *The Lucy Show*, etc. use names of celebrities. Despite the fact that the name of the celebrity is not changed, the emotions and situations are wittily and self-deprecatingly exaggerated to a comedic effect, much like in Ovid's *personae* in the *Amores*. Perhaps to a certain extent there is an ounce of truth, but that is lost and there is no need to search for it. Like the *Amores*, these sitcoms are entertainment.

teacher of love? These questions are the wrong questions to ask. Often Ovid the historical character has been enmeshed into Ovid the poet, the lover, the teacher—and for good reason. Ovid does not make it easy for us to make any distinction between historical and fictional Ovid. Sharrock explains it thus:

The *Amores* offer us a realist speaker who cannot simply be divorced from the ‘I’ of the individual poem, still less from the ‘I’ of the body of the poetry. The gap between lover and poet is paradoxically both more and less wide in Ovid’s amatory poetry than in the elegiac tradition of Propertius and Tibullus: more ironically detached, and also more challengingly personal. While both lover and beloved are both artificial and realist, nonetheless he, we might say, ‘seems real,’ but she ‘seems like an illusion of reality,’ because the subjective nature of elegy creates a powerful realism for the speaker/poet, and a totalizing, objectifying, illusionism for the mistress, and moreover the speaker’s realism is actually predicated on the mistress’ objectification. ... The *persona* Ovid adopts, then, must be quite separate from himself, for that’s how parody works. So it might seem—but this is not all that the poem does. The massive concentration on the Big Self which this poem presents, in the first person, denies us any easy splitting up of the poet from the *persona*.<sup>11</sup>

Sharrock explains the “Big Self” as the “I” of Ovid. Therefore, in my own thesis, I make no distinction between historical Ovid and Ovid the poet, lover, and teacher.<sup>12</sup>

### *Corinna and the puella in the Amores*

In a section from Book 3 of his *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid explains to his readers that they should trust in the poets (Ovid included, of course):

*carmina qui facimus, mittamus carmina tantum:  
hic chorus ante alios aptus amare sumus.  
nos facimus placitae late praeconia formae: 535  
nomen habet Nemesis, Cynthia nomen habet,  
Vesper et Eoae novere Lycorida terrae,  
et multi, quae sit nostra Corinna, rogant.*

We who make songs, should send only songs:  
here, we are the chorus, best suited above all, for love.  
We advertise far and wide charming beauties:  
Nemesis has a name, Cynthia too,

<sup>11</sup> Sharrock (2002) 156-7. See also Keith (1994) 33, who notes that in the *Amores*, there is more than just one *puella*, and duly notes that in *Am.* 2.4, Ovid’s taste in women is indiscriminate.

<sup>12</sup> I follow Boyd 139 fn. 17 (1998) who explains: “in referring to the narrator or the poet in the *Amores*, I mean the first-person narrator-focalizer created (but only implicitly fictionalized) by Ovid to deliver the narrative of the *Amores*; when I refer to the lover, I mean the explicitly fictional identity Ovid gives to himself as a character or actor within his own poetry.”

you'll have grown familiar with Lycoris from East to West,  
and many people are asking who my Corinna is.<sup>13</sup>

Booth asks: “Was Corinna even Ovid’s girl at all?,” explaining that Corinna “is apparently named after a sixth-century BC (or later) female Greek lyrist, though the name is alternatively explained as a cognate with *korē*, the Greek for ‘girl’,”<sup>14</sup> which is synonymous with *puella*, which is typically a term used for “girlfriend.”<sup>15</sup> One indicator of her fictitiousness is in Apuleius *Apol.* 10, who, in his list of aliases, unmask the *puellae* from elegy, but leaves out Ovid’s Corinna.<sup>16</sup> Armstrong suggests that even though given a name, which should initially mark her out as some sort of identifiable person, “the name itself might almost be ‘Everywoman.’ Perhaps Corinna is, in a sense, anonymous after all; perhaps she might represent *any* girl loved by the poet of the *Amores*.”<sup>17</sup>

In the *Ars* passage above, Ovid names the lovers from the poems of other elegists, yet many people ask him who his own Corinna is. Kennedy notes that he leaves the question unanswered and compellingly argues that “to offer any kind of ‘answer’ would be to disrupt the reading practice to which the *Amores* are accommodated.”<sup>18</sup> Is there a solution on how to read Corinna or the *puella*? Kennedy explains that because elegy focuses on passion and the suffering which it engenders,

the options for a Roman author were limited, Veyne suggests. Adoring a married woman in vain was out; the Romans would have laughed at the poetry of the troubadours, he asserts. The only way for a Roman to suffer poetically was to love a woman unworthy of marriage.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Ars* 3.533-538 from Kenney’s (1961) OCT.

<sup>14</sup> Booth (2009) 66.

<sup>15</sup> Armstrong (2005) 54.

<sup>16</sup> Booth (2009) 66.

<sup>17</sup> Armstrong (2005) 54.

<sup>18</sup> Kennedy (1993) 90.

<sup>19</sup> Kennedy (1993) 93.

To define Corinna or the *puella* is to give away the game. Defining her or making some sort of historical connection would remove the vagueness or fluidity of her role in the *Amores*. Kennedy notes that the only necessary condition from Ovid's poetic point of view is that she is displayed as "unattainable."<sup>20</sup> If our attempt included revealing the identity of Corinna or the *puella*, it would also have to take the *vir* or rival into account. He is a character who is overshadowed by Corinna. We must, however, take into account that elegy is a form of entertainment. Kennedy explains that the ideal reader was not to identify with the poet, but to consider his love servitude and protests as humorous.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Corinna's status is undefined because there is no need. In the *Amores*, she and the *puella* are unstable enough to accommodate Ovid's poetic motivations of continuing the illusive, elegiac reality.

#### *The Rival in the Amores*

The identity of the rival in Ovid's *Amores* is even more obscure than that of Corinna or the *puella*. Rivals discussed in *Amores* 1.4 and 2.4 include the unnamed *vir*, an unknown man in *Amores* 2.5, and even the reader. As for the *vir* and nameless rival, Sharrock notes:

For the poet to love, and the lover to write, there needs to be both an opportunity and a challenge. The poems also show how the lover's discourse is not just something between himself and the object of his desire. A third party comes into it as well: it might be a 'rival' or a 'friend' (or even both at once), but what is crucial about this 'other person' is that he breaks down the pseudo-barriers of intimate exclusivity which the discourse of love poses for the loving couple, but can never deliver.<sup>22</sup>

Miller adds that that the *vir* indeed serves a "valuable function" in the *Amores*: as

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<sup>20</sup> Kennedy (1993) 93.

<sup>21</sup> Kennedy (1993) 93.

<sup>22</sup> Sharrock (2002) 155.

rival, he

prevents the love relationship from collapsing into a game of narcissistic reflection. He stands for the social norms that elegy famously seeks to violate. The legitimacy of his claim to Corinna in 1.4, his *vir*-ility (or should I say *vir*-iness?), is what makes the love affair possible in its very self-definition as the opposite of epic and of social normality (cf. *Amores* 1.1).<sup>23</sup>

Thus the *vir* functions as a rival lover within Ovid's *Amores*. Yet the reader acts as a possible poetic rival outside of the *Amores*. Ovid shares his poetry with the world, yet because he is aware of this, the *personae* and the language of his poems are purposely ambiguous.

## **II. Experimentation with unstable personae = New Beginnings?**

Ovid's *Amores* are the gateway to the rest of his poetic enterprises. The *Amores* are traditionally classified as elegy, but these poems differ from those of Propertius or Tibullus. Upon reading all three books of the *Amores*, one can see the beginnings of the *Ars Amatoria*, *Remedia Amoris*, *Fasti*, and *Heroides*, some of his greatest experimentations in the elegiac genre. Above all, what is most interesting is Ovid's ability not only to create unstable *personae* (the lover, the *praeceptor amoris*, Corinna, the *puella*, the *vir*/rival), but to enhance their instabilities in his *Amores* by means of constant metamorphoses. Even the epigram to the *Amores* is clear proof of this constant change:<sup>24</sup>

Qui modo Nasonis fueramus quique libelli,  
tres sumus: hoc illi praetulit auctor opus.  
ut iam nulla tibi nos sit legisse voluptas,  
at levior demptis poena duobus erit.

We who were once five books of Naso are now three:  
the author preferred this work over that one.  
Now, if there might be no joy to you in reading us,

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<sup>23</sup> Miller (2004) 171.

<sup>24</sup> For the *Amores*, I use Kenney's (1961) OCT.

at least the punishment will be lighter now by two books.

Even in the epigram, Ovid manages to insert the self-deprecating humor that pervades the *Amores*. The idea that his poetry has changed is a sort of foreshadowing of what the audience is to expect. The number of books is not the only thing to change.



## CHAPTER 2

### I. Unstable personae in Amores 1.4

In Amores 1.4, Ovid introduces himself as *praeceptor amoris* and teaches his *puella* how to deceive her *vir*. Ovid also describes himself as the tortured lover; as poet, he makes the lover the mouthpiece of his love poetry. Ovid makes this poem complex and engaging for the reader by creating an unstable amalgamation of characters (*personae*) for himself as teacher, lover and poet. But often the boundaries between these *personae* are not clearly demarcated. As poet, Ovid has the ability to speak for himself as lover and teacher, yet neither character can exist without the introduction of the beloved, the *puella*. And her presence, as well as that of the rival, further complicates these *personae*.

The *puella*, addressed in line 3 but not yet named at this point in the Amores, is identified in this poem as a woman who is already romantically involved with another man, but still remains available for Ovid. In this poem, her status is neither determined by Ovid nor does it appear to be much of a concern for him. Thus, it is uncertain if she is to be considered a married woman or a prostitute—both of which are extremes. Perhaps there is a middle ground. McKeown may offer a suggestion; he believes that this mistress is a freedwoman

over whom her patron, Ovid's rival in this poem, has retained certain *droits de seigneur*. To consider Corinna a freedwoman and unmarried seems to accord best with such little information as Ovid gives elsewhere about his mistress... a liaison with a freedwoman, whether married or not, was unlikely to attract strong censure.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> McKeown (1989) 77-8.

Whatever the case may be, the *puella*'s status is left undetermined by Ovid; thus we should assume that he creates her *persona* as tangible enough for a reader to visualize her effect on Ovid as lover, yet vague enough to provoke uncertainty of her existence. We the audience at least know that she is cherished (*dilectam*, 3; *mea lux*, 25), beautiful (*purpureas genas*, 22; *habiles papillae*, 37) and of delicate frame (*mollis manus*, 24; *mite caput*, 36; *tenerum pedem*, 44).

Last is the rival, the ambiguous *vir* in line 1. He is also unnamed (and described much less vividly than the *puella* is) and is unknowing of his cheating partner and the relaying of their secret love messages. He is also the one who has the right to lock her away every night. Are we to consider that the *puella* and the *vir* are married?<sup>26</sup> It is difficult to determine given that Ovid makes their relationship ambiguous. If these two were man and wife, Ovid could have provided a less ambiguous term such as *coniunx*<sup>27</sup> or *maritus*; but it is evident that he intends to introduce the *vir* only as an obscure character who serves as a rival. Furthermore, the refusal to assign him a specific term (such as *coniunx*) reveals that Ovid prefers to keep not only the *vir* ambiguous, but also his relationship unstable.

After the imprisonment of the *puella* each night, does this nameless *vir* win in the end? We should consider that the rival's presence is what spurs the entire scene

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<sup>26</sup> Miller (2004) 170 seems to think that the *vir* "is Corinna's husband and hence that the relationship portrayed in the *Amores* is an adulterous one. This reading sees Ovid deliberately flouting Augustus's moral reform and its reconstruction of *virtus*—'virtue,' 'courage,' but also 'manliness'—as embodied in the *mos maiorum*." As will be seen in my argument above, I prefer not to assume the *vir* is Corinna's husband.

<sup>27</sup> Perhaps this would have been a more fitting word if Ovid was not being purposely ambiguous; the term *coniunx* works well with the scenes described where Ovid orders his girl to not join her thigh to her *vir*'s.

of *Am.* 1.4; the rival, much like the *puella*, is a significant character employed by Ovid as poet to influence the thoughts and feelings of Ovid as lover in the *Amores*. It appears that at first, Ovid as poet is controlling his own poetry—and he does, to a certain extent, in terms of poetic rhetoric. But without the *puella* and *vir*, Ovid would be not a lover or teacher, but merely a poet. Thus, both the manifold characters Ovid inhabits (lover, teacher, girlfriend, and rival alike) and relationships of these characters with each other are what control and create the identity of Ovid the poet. Therefore we the readers are able to see how Ovid intermingles the identities that he creates; these characters, so intricately bound together, become nearly inseparable (i.e., one character could not fulfill his or her role without the presence of the others).

These characters are complicated by the presence of ambiguous language, which Ovid uses to heighten their instability. Ovid instructs his *puella* in subtle gestures of secret love in detail, which are all outlined for us, the readers (to be discussed later). He suffers and is frustrated because he cannot touch her when he pleases. The subtle gestures that Ovid describes are by definition not overt, and may even be overlooked or misunderstood; they characterize Ovid the poet as well, and his overtures as lover, poet, and teacher are susceptible to confusion and misdirection. Thus, just as the lover and his mistress communicate indirectly and unclearly, so too is Ovid's communication with the readers indirect and unclear, leaving them off guard about how to interpret the poem and its characters. Ovid, though attempting to use these tools of deception of the *vir* to his advantage,

manages to fail in the end: by the end of the night, the *puella* is shut in by her man and subdued to his will. Ovid begs that she deny all of last night's events.

## II. The Hippodameia exemplum

To further illustrate the complex and unstable characters, Ovid compares his girl with Hippodameia as the mythical exemplum in 1.4.7-10:

*desine<sup>28</sup> mirari, posito quod candida vino  
Atracis ambiguos traxit in arma viros;  
nec mihi silva domus nec equo mea membra cohaerent:  
vix a te videor posse tenere manus.* 10

Stop wondering at how, when the wine was set, the radiant  
daughter of Atrax forced the centaurs into arms;  
My home is not a forest nor are my limbs joined to a horse:  
It seems that I'm barely able to keep my hands off you!

In Greek myth, there were two women by the name of Hippodameia,<sup>29</sup> one the daughter of Oenomaus, and the other the daughter of Atrax. Oenomaus, king of Pisa, in fear of an oracle that said he would be killed by his son-in-law, decreed that any suitor in seeking the hand of his daughter must first defeat him in a chariot race; only then could Hippodameia be happily wed. Oenomaus also bid that any losers be killed immediately thereafter. Pelops, by trickery and Poseidon's favor, eventually won Hippodameia; this victory, however, involved the death of Oenomaus.<sup>30</sup> The latter Hippodameia, daughter of a Thessalian king, Atrax, was married off to Pirithous, a Lapith king, who invited the centaurs to the wedding. Hippodameia's beauty

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<sup>28</sup> Showerman and Goold's (1997) Loeb text prints *desino*, but without supporting apparatus.

<sup>29</sup> For information on Briseis as Hippodameia, see Dictys Cretensis 2.17 and Dué (2002) 56-7.

<sup>30</sup> The story of the chariot race and its aftermath can be found in Hyginus' *Fabulae* 84 and 253, Pindar *Ol.* 1, and Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* E2. 2 – 10. And there were lost plays of both Euripides and Sophocles by the name of *Oenomaus*.

attracted the drunken centaurs, which led to their unsuccessful attempt to rape her.<sup>31</sup>

Ovid mentions the latter Hippodameia, daughter of Atrax, in *Am.* 1.4. One wonders

whether Ovid needs to clarify which Hippodameia he refers or if it is simply a

periphrastic and poetic way of introducing this myth. McKeown notes that the

centaur couplet (7-8) is reworked in 2.12.19f.<sup>32</sup> However, in this reworking the word

*ambiguus* is not repeated; therefore this word highlights the uncertainty of both the

character to which Ovid likens himself and of the situation in which he is involved.

Ovid may not need to clarify which Hippodameia he uses because a) it contributes to

the instability on which this poem is founded by drawing attention to Hippodameia's

name by not using it (and in *Am.* 3.2.13-18, he does refer to the alternate Hippodameia

myth)<sup>33</sup> or b) the word play of *Atracis ... traxit* (7), which may explain the patronymic.

Not only does he refer to the alternate myth (Hippodameia as daughter of Oenomaus,

*Am.* 3.2.13-18), but he also names her, unlike in *Am.* 1.4, where he uses a patronymic.

Boyd describes the mythological *exemplum* used in *Am.* 3.2 as a way of illuminating a

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<sup>31</sup> For the most complete and extant account of this myth, cf. *Met.* 12.210-535. McKeown (1989) 81 also notes other paradigms of ill-mannered, centaur-like conduct at banquets: *Ars.* 1.593, *Hom. Od.* 21.295ff., *Cic. Pis.* 22, *Hor. Carm.* 1.18.8, *Dio Chrys.* 27.2, *Lucian Symp.* 45.

McKeown (1989) 82 notes that in the majority of the versions of the myth, Hippodameia is the name of Pirithous' bride. cf. *Hom. Il.* 2.742, *Epist.* 17.249f, *an fera Centauris indicere bella coegit / Atracis Haemonios Hippodamia viros?*

For other descriptions of creatures using some form of the word *ambiguus*, McKeown (1989) 82-3 notes specifically 3.12.28 (of the Sirens or the Sphinx) *ambiguae... virginis*, *Met.* 2.9 *Protea... ambiguum*, 7.271 (of a werewolf) *ambigui... lupi*, *TLL* 1.1843.61ff., also *Ars* 2.24 (of the Minotaur) *semibovemque virum semivirumque bovem*.

<sup>32</sup> McKeown (1989) 82. *femina silvestres Lapithas populumque biformem / turpiter apposite vertit in arma mero*. "A woman shamefully turned the forest-dwelling Lapiths and centaurs (literally, "biformed people") to arms because of wine."

<sup>33</sup> *Si mihi currenti fueris conspecta, morabor, / deque meis manibus lora remissa fluent. / a, quam paene Pelops Pisaea concidit hasta, / dum spectat vultus, Hippodamia, tuos! / nempe favore suae vicit tamen ille puellae: / vincamus dominae quisque favore suae*. "If I caught sight of you as I was running, I will slow down, and the reins will drop from my hands. Oh, Pelops barely dodged a Pisaeen spear, while he was watching your face, Hippodameia! But surely he won through the favor of his girl: let each of us now win through the favor of his girl."

“number of aspects of the lover’s situation.”<sup>34</sup> The same could be argued with Am. 1.4: it is more fitting to compare periphrastically and poetically an unnamed daughter of Atrax with the unnamed *puella* and an uninhibited, ambiguous centaur with Ovid the lover, who is himself not clearly defined and involved in an unpredictable relationship.

Ovid states that he is not like the centaurs, at least in dwelling (*nec mihi silva domus*, 9) or appearance (*nec equo mea membra cohaerent*, 9). Yet he immediately negates this when in line 10 when he says that he is barely able to keep his hands from her; he is thus comparing himself to a centaur because he is drunk from wine and lusting after a beautiful woman (i.e., the *puella*). If Ovid were the centaur, literally an “ambiguous man,” then the already ambiguous *vir*, who was presented at the beginning of the poem (the *puella*’s partner), would have to be Pirithous; this complicates both the identity of the lover and the *vir*: now there are two ambiguous men, both with not quite stable identities.

Later, in lines 43-4, Ovid repeats the language of joined limbs:

*nec femori committe femur nec crure cohaere  
nec tenerum duro cum pede iunge pedem.*

Do not fix your thigh to his thigh nor embrace his leg  
nor join your tender foot with his harsh foot.

Ovid orders his girl to refuse at all costs to join her limbs with those of her *vir*. This situation is colored with more of an erotic tone than in line 9, especially when we consider how Ovid describes the *puella*’s own body parts (the important ones, anyway), starting with her neck (*tua colla*, 35), head (*mite caput*, 36), and lips (*oscula*,

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<sup>34</sup> Boyd (1997) 207.

38) and progressing down to her chest (*habiles papillae*, 37), then to her thighs (*femur*, 43) and feet (*tenerum pedem*, 44); Ovid has run out of body parts to describe and lets his fears get the best of him: he knows that the joining of limbs results in lovemaking. Perhaps what Ovid wants to say is that his limbs are the only ones to which she should cling.

Ovid also uses the word *videor* in line 10 to strengthen this comparison to a centaur and to add to his own ambiguity. In the active voice, *video* applies more to the physical sense of seeing, whereas *video* in the passive voice implies more of a sense of seeming, a term about which we should be wary upon consideration. The twentieth entry from the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* indicates that with an infinitive, *video* in the passive can mean “to appear, seem, to be thought (to be such-and-such).”<sup>35</sup> Here, it first appears that the lover is describing how he feels, but his words are controlled by the poet. Ovid attempts to evoke the reality of this situation (i.e., his desire of the *puella* and frustrations with his rival), but words such as *videor* betray the poet by capturing and enhancing the illusion of reality that the poet creates; it is enough to convince at least the lover of how similar his desperation is to that of a drunken, lusty centaur. Yet, Ovid’s attempt to appear as threatening as a centaur is undermined upon the reader’s realization of Ovid’s helplessness; though he says he can barely keep his hands off of her, he could not even touch, much less carry off, his *puella* even if he wanted to: he must stay in character as a secret lover. Boyd states that

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<sup>35</sup> OLD s.v. *video*, entry 20.

The realism of scenes and actions when first depicted, already qualified by the narrator's control of the narrative, gives way in retelling the detachment of literary framing. In each poem, Ovid invokes a lover to act in and speak of his love; but this lover is the creation of the poet, who uses the literary past to invent anew the lover's amatory experience. The resulting realism derives its meaning from Ovid's poetic memory.<sup>36</sup>

She adds that Ovid's ingenuity is most brilliant when he joins together both the literary tradition of elegy and the earnest lover's feelings to create the unique, yet unstable identity of the poet. It is this approach to elegy, "the embedding of an amatory plot into a narrative about becoming a poet,"<sup>37</sup> that makes it distinctly Ovidian.

Literally the "horse-tamer," Hippodameia could be connected to the *puella* in that she herself (the *puella*) has a power to domesticate (if we're using horse-speak) both Ovid (the centaur half-man, half-beast) and the *vir*. One cannot help notice relation between the noun *domina* (common trope for tortured lover's mistress) and the verb *domo*, *domare* (or *domito domitare*). Ovid invokes elegiac tradition by emulating the feelings of the tortured, impassioned lover (*vix a te videor posse tenere manus*, 10). However, Miller notes that this line seems to have more violent than erotic associations; that is, it is more in accord with the typically violent nature of the centaurs and their intent of bestial rape in this particular myth.<sup>38</sup> Violence in elegy is not atypical. For example, a whole poem is devoted to Ovid's regret after hitting his lover in *Amores* 1.7.<sup>39</sup> We might also recall that often elegists made due use of the typical elegiac trope of the lover being a soldier of Cupid; thus they all show the

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<sup>36</sup> Boyd (1997) 163.

<sup>37</sup> Boyd (1993) 163.

<sup>38</sup> Miller (2002) 250.

<sup>39</sup> For more on violence and voyeurism in *Amores* 1.7, see Greene (1999) 409.



violent characteristics of love, *amor*.<sup>40</sup> If Hippodameia is a horse-tamer of sorts, this might be conflated with the role of the *puella* (or, rather, the dominant mistress) as the cause of Ovid's suffering. However violent and controlling he is insinuating himself to be, he remains subservient. Miller states that because the

monstrous quality of the lover as centaur clashes with the role of *praeceptor amoris* that the poet subsequently assumes as he instructs Corinna in the art of deceiving her *vir*. ... The paradox then is that the poet portrays himself as simultaneously more barbarous (i.e., a centaur) and less harsh, *durus*, than the *vir*. Yet this contradiction, in terms of Roman sexual ideology, is more apparent than real. For inasmuch as *mollitia* was defined as a loss of self-control, then the centaurs and the elegiac poet were all equally *mollis* in relation to the *vir*, even as they might appear to be polar opposites. It is as if in their very excess of virility the centaurs have become a group that is to be dominated rather than dominant. They are not fully men and hence they are, in the zero-sum game of Roman sexual politics, necessarily effeminate. Everyone is getting screwed here.<sup>41</sup>

Also it is interesting that Ovid, in his *exemplum* of implied bestial rape, names a (Greek) myth here. Myths were known for their ambiguous and various versions, which were often indebted to oral tradition. The fullest extant treatment of the Hippodameia-Pirithous myth is in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 12.210-535. One cannot help but wonder if the Hippodameia-Pirithous myth and the Hippodameia-Pelops myth were conflated in the *Amores*. The latter's father was Oenomaus, literally a "wine man" of sorts; it is difficult not to make the association with the drunken, uncontrolled centaurs at the wedding of Pirithous. After beating her father Oenomaus in a chariot race, Pelops saves his wife from nearly being raped by a man named Myrtilus, which recalls Pirithous saving his own wife from the centaurs. And if we look at line 10 of Ovid's poem, Ovid is even like a thwarted Myrtilus who

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<sup>40</sup> For a detailed study of violence in the *Amores* cf. Cahoon (1988). For a feminist perspective on violence, rape, and sexuality in sections from the *Metamorphoses*, *Fasti*, and *Ars Amatoria*, see Richlin (1992).

<sup>41</sup> Miller (2004) 176-77.

attempted rape. Furthermore, Pirithous and the centaurs could have been cousins: the former was born of Ixion (or Zeus) and Dia while the latter were from Ixion and Nephele (or from Apollo and Stilbe).<sup>42</sup> The etymology of the word centaur and centaurs' birth origins also remain uncertain. Even centaurs themselves are liminal creatures in that they are not quite human, yet not quite animals. With the use of such ambiguous creatures, both in name and appearance, Ovid exploits these ambiguities by suitably comparing them to himself. Perhaps a conflation of the two Hippodameia myths is implied; both involve attempted abduction. Ovid has thus demonstrated not only the instability of myth, but also that of the lover in his *Amores*. The unclearness of myth and its characters influence the complexity of identity in his poetry.

Based on this inconsistent *exemplum*, there may be confusion as to whether Ovid is a centaur, Pirithous, or even Myrtilus. There is uncertainty of the outcome of Ovid's situation and also in the way Ovid presents himself; this uncertainty might reflect his feelings as the agonized lover, which are also skillfully depicted by him as poet. Therefore, his poetry adapts to the fictional situation into which he has put himself. Ovid depicts his *puella* as naïve in the art of love. However, throughout this poem we must assume that she learns more and becomes knowledgeable of her ability to attract in this imagined situation (although we are never really told of any real progress she makes); the *puella* is never depicted as carrying out Ovid's orders

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<sup>42</sup> See Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 4. 69. 1, Scholia on Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 1 40 for the origin of centaurs from Apollo and Stilbe. See Hyginus *Fabulae* 62 for the centaur's origins from Ixion and Nephele.

One must also consider the fact that the characters are not given voices, which makes it harder to determine how they think and feel. Ovid manipulates what we as readers understand of these characters and even influences how we interpret them. Perhaps, in a way, he manipulates our ability to identify properly with or to prejudice against the *vir* and the *puella*. Ovid does so by assembling unstable characters in this poem. For example, there are shifts in the roles which Ovid performs; the heavy use of the imperative and a sprinkling of subjunctives (e.g., *sint* 11; *cognosce* 11; *da* 12; *veni* 13, 14) are used when Ovid plays the role of *praeceptor amoris*. Role shifts will be addressed in the following sections.

Ovid displays a constant awareness of the presence of a rival. The complication of the third person subverts his authority as teacher of love. Also, the fact that Ovid's advice backfires is a detriment to his credibility—at least as far as the readers are concerned. Two examples of this miscarriage include *Am.* 1.4.1-6 and 11-14:

Your man is about to come to our very same banquet:  
I pray that your man's feast be his last!  
Therefore, should I have to look at my dear girl only as a dinner guest?  
Will there be another, whom it pleases to be touched,  
will you cherish another's lap, snuggling closely to him?  
Will that man embrace your neck when he wants?

*quae tibi sint facienda tamen cognosce, nec Euris      11*  
*da mea nec tepidis verba ferenda Notis.*  
*ante veni quam vir; nec quid, si veneris ante,*  
*possit agi video, sed tamen ante veni.*

So try to get familiar with a few things that you've got to do,  
and don't go throwing away my words away to eastern or balmy southern winds!  
Arrive before your partner; even if you could show up before him,  
I'm not sure if I would be able to do anything anyway, but come before him still.

The *vir* is made the subject in the first line while Ovid marginalizes himself in the dative case (*mihi*) and renders himself as a guest (*conviva*). By describing his opponent actively while describing himself passively, Ovid manages to undermine himself and to antagonize the *vir* (passively, at least; literally, he prays against him) in the very first couplet of *Am.* 1.4. By line 4, he must behold (*aspiciam*) his dear girl as a mere dinner guest. The word *aspiciam* is repeated in 41-42: “And yet I’ll look on at these things, / but things which the coverlets hide well, / those will be my secret cause of fear” (*haec tamen aspiciam, sed quae bene pallia celant, / illa mihi caeci causa timoris erunt.*) This word captures the conflicting emotions of the lover, who is at first indignant at what he will have to bear seeing, but later, in lines 41-2, he realizes that there are more reasons to feel apprehensive about what he would *not* be able to see.<sup>43</sup> In either case, the lover remains helpless. Once more, Ovid isolates himself by reserving for himself the role of the observer, the outsider. The *vir* does all of the touching while Ovid is the anxious spectator. Added to his impotent fears is the word *apte* (“closely”) in line 5, which Miller asserts has sexual connotations and suggests

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<sup>43</sup> McKeown (1989) 93.

that the *puella* is subject to the power of her *vir*.<sup>44</sup> Here, and later in the poem, we see the girl under control of the *vir*, much to Ovid's helpless indignation.

Beginning with lines 11-12, Ovid shifts from his role of tortured lover to that of the *praeceptor amoris*, teacher of love. McKeown notes that lines 11-12 formally introduce us to Ovid's *praecepta* in a "suitably prosaic manner. Neither the gerundive nor the gerund of *facio* is frequent in Augustan poetry."<sup>45</sup> Since this is prosaic, it may at first appear a bit jarring because of its incongruity with typical elegiac poetry. But upon remembering that this poem involves Ovid teaching his *puella* deception, it makes more sense. He wants to give the illusion of teacher, but it becomes somewhat absurd when we consider that this is elegy; that is, we should expect his efforts as teacher to be undermined. There may also be a sense of urgency connected to the use of *facio*; he is desperate that events and his teachings turn out to his favor, but knows better. In lines 13-14, the poet ironically admits that his own instructions are fruitless, but insists that they be carried out anyway; this foreshadows other examples in *Am.* 1.4 where Ovid will undermine his self-proclaimed authority and knowledge, thus propelling the theme of instability.<sup>46</sup>

Despite his lack of authority, Ovid attempts to educate her anyway. As *praeceptor amoris*, he teaches certain tricks to his *puella*, in hopes of distracting her from her *vir* in *Am.* 1.4.15-38:

*cum premet ille torum, vultu comes ipsa modesto*    15  
*ibis ut accumbas, clam mihi tange pedem;*  
*me specta nutusque meos vultumque loquacem:*

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<sup>44</sup> Miller (2002) 251.

<sup>45</sup> McKeown (1989) 83.

<sup>46</sup> Miller (2002) 250.

*excipe furtivas et refer ipsa notas.*  
*verba superciliis sine voce loquentia dicam;*  
*verba leges digitis, verba notata mero.* 20  
*cum tibi succurret Veneris lascivia nostrae,*  
*purpureas tenero pollice tange genas;*  
*si quid erit, de me tacita quod mente queraris,*  
*pendeat extrema mollis ab aure manus;*  
*cum tibi, quae faciam, mea lux, dicamve, placebunt,* 25  
*versetur digitis anulus usque tuis;*  
*tange manu mensam, tangent quo more precantes,*  
*optabis merito cum mala multo viro.*  
*quod tibi miscuerit, sapias, bibat ipse iubeto;*  
*tu puerum leviter posce, quod ipsa voles:* 30  
*quae tu reddideris, ego primus pocula sumam,*  
*et, qua tu biberis, hac ego parte bibam.*  
*si tibi forte dabit quod praegustaverit ipse,*  
*reice libatos illius ore cibos;*  
*nec premat inpositis sinu tua colla lacertis,* 35  
*mite nec in rigido pectore pone caput,*  
*nec sinus admittat digitos habilesve papillae;*  
*oscula praecipue nulla dedisse velis.*

When that man reclines, you yourself, with a modest look,  
 will go as his companion, but as you lie down, secretly touch my foot!  
 Look at me and my nods and expressive face:  
 receive my secret signs and return them yourself.  
 I'll speak with my eyebrows words that can communicate without a voice;  
 you'll read my words drawn out by my fingers, words written in wine.  
 When naughty thoughts of our love-making come to your mind,  
 touch your rosy cheeks with your tender finger;  
 if you'd like to express, taciturnly, any sort of dissatisfaction about me,  
 let your tender hand tug on your outer earlobe;  
 when, light of my life, anything I do or say pleases you,  
 continuously turn a ring around on your finger;  
 touch the table with your hand, like praying people touch it,  
 when you wish upon your man the many ills that he deserves.  
 What he mixes for you, be reasonable, forbid it, let him drink it himself;  
 quietly ask your serving boy for what you yourself want:  
 what you have returned, I'll first take up the cup,  
 and from where you've drunk, from this part I shall drink.  
 If, as luck would have it, he himself gives you what he has already sampled,  
 refuse the nibbled food from that man's mouth;  
 don't let him weigh down your neck by throwing his arms over it,  
 don't place your gentle head onto his stiff chest,  
 and don't let your cloak or supple breasts admit his fingers;  
 you especially won't want to give him any kisses.

As teacher, Ovid instructs his *puella* in all of the furtive expressions used with faces

and fingers, but advises her to above all not give in to the *vir*'s sexual advances.

Talkative eyebrows and fingers remain as the obligatory form of communication;

conversation between the two does not happen in this poem because Ovid is a powerless *praeceptor*; he can teach her all he wants beforehand, but during the dinner itself, their relationship must remain a secret. Ovid gives the *puella* the power to express herself, but tells her *how* to do so. Yet there is uncertainty as to who has the agency here. Ovid appears to be maintaining a false sense of control: he is giving her the right to choose certain gestures to express how she feels. Moreover, these gestures which Ovid suggests would seem to draw attention to their supposed secrecy, a clear indication of Ovid's lack of knowledge of how to conduct secret language. That is, he knows the ridiculous effect it will make.

This passage employs double entendre. Miller notes the innuendo Ovid uses; in line 37, for instance, the word *sinus* in this context refers to the folds in the *puella*'s cloak, but this could also be a euphemism for "vagina," which indicates that there is a chance for heavy petting to occur.<sup>47</sup> Adams further elucidates the word by explaining that not only is it used of the vagina, but also of the womb and that anatomically, it strictly denotes the space between the chest and the arms held in front of one's chest as if clutching something (i.e., the bosom) and "it is not from this usage that... anatomical examples could be derived, but from its use in application to any hollow space or cavity."<sup>48</sup>

The erotically charged language continues not only in this passage, but resonates throughout the entire poem. Ovid ranges from the more obvious terms

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<sup>47</sup> Miller (2002) 251.

<sup>48</sup> Adams (1982) 90. For similar usage of *sinus*, cf. Tib. 1.8.36 (*teneros conserit usque sinus*) or Ov. *Fast.* 5.256 (*tangitur et tacto concipit illa sinu*).

(*oscula* 38, 39, 51, 63; *papillae* 37; *veneris lascivia* 21; *voluptas* 47; *blanditiae* 66; *maligna* *venus* 66) to the literary and metaphorical, but with a continued erotic tone (*mollis* 24; *mite caput* 36; *dulce opus* 48; *surges... surgemus* 55). The most repeated word of this particular poem is *tango* in some conjugated form.<sup>49</sup> Other words that concern the physical act of touching include *cohaerent* (10), *cohaere* (43), *premat* (35), *committe* (43), and *iunge* (44). Adams states the word *haereo* has a “wide range of attested sexual uses”<sup>50</sup> and that “verbs of pressing and the like are often used of the male role... *Comprimo* was probably a native Latin euphemism of the educated language.”<sup>51</sup> Adams also notes that *iungo* and *coniungo* were standard references to marriage but were also used of a “joining” in terms of intercourse. Many times Ovid refers to both the literal and symbolic joinings.<sup>52</sup> These words, while eroticized, are included within the list of commands Ovid teaches; ironically during this dinner party, it is he who cannot do the touching or be touched while the *vir* is around, but also bids the *puella* to refrain from physical contact of whatever sort with her partner. What is most ironic is what happens in the end: despite all of Ovid’s orders, the *puella* is compelled to submit to her *vir*’s desires in Ovid’s absence.

The language of this passage deals entirely with gestures with double meanings: in this case, actions are more clearly understood than words, with the *vir* being excluded, of course. Take, for example, the ambiguous usage of the word *sapias* in line 29: Miller notes that if one were to stop reading the line at that word, it

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<sup>49</sup> *Tange* in lines 16, 22, 27, 58; *tangunt* in line 27; *tangere* in line 58.

<sup>50</sup> Adams (1982) 181. The uses he specifies are of copulation, of manual stimulation, and of *cunnilingio*.

<sup>51</sup> Adams (1982) 182.

<sup>52</sup> Adams (1982) 179.



would originally mean “to taste”; it is not until the reader arrives at the word *iubeto* that the alternate meaning of *sapias* is “be sensible,” but with the context of “do not taste.”<sup>53</sup> The ambiguous meaning of this one word, for instance, is appropriate to the tone of this poem when we consider both of its meanings: tasting and knowing. Wine is not something in which the *puella* should completely indulge herself; she should let the *vir* do the drinking so that as a result, his drunkenness renders him useless when it comes to sexual activity (51-4). Ovid emphasizes this scene with buzzwords such as wine, drinking, tasting, and lips, again, all eroticized. Though the *vir* is drunk, Ovid is still not at liberty to touch his girl as he pleases. Thus he suggests they rise up in the crowd (*surges, surgemus*, line 55); this language contains sexual innuendo and provides insight on how Ovid feels at the moment (i.e., lusty beast). We must also consider that the *vir*’s drunkenness is of course temporary; at the end of the night, he stumbles back to the *puella*, a situation which Ovid can no longer control.

In the first passage, during the dinner party, Ovid suffers because he can only look at his girl and not touch her. In the second passage, after dinner, he is still distressed when he cannot even look upon her. In both situations, Ovid has no control, even though previously he portrayed himself as love-teacher. Yet, even throughout the poem, his role of teacher is precarious, a position of which Ovid is painfully conscious. For example, in the following passage, even though Ovid is instructing her in fooling her *vir*, he demands in turn that she not hide anything from him at this dinner party in *Am.* 1.4.39-50:

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<sup>53</sup> Miller (2002) 251.

oscula si dederis, <i>fiam manifestus amator</i>	
et dicam 'mea sunt' <i>iniciamque manum.</i>	40
<i>haec tamen aspiciam, sed quae bene pallia celant,</i>	
<i>illa mihi caeca causa timoris erunt.</i>	
<i>nec femori committe femur nec crure cohaere</i>	
<i>nec tenerum duro cum pede iunge pedem.</i>	
<i>multa miser timeo, quia feci multa proterve,</i>	45
<i>exemplique metu torqueor ipse mei:</i>	
<i>saepe mihi dominaeque meae properata voluptas</i>	
<i>veste sub iniecta dulce peregit opus.</i>	
<i>hoc tu non facies; sed ne fecisse puteris,</i>	
<i>conscia de tergo pallia deme tuo.</i>	50

If you grant him kisses, I'll make myself a conspicuous lover  
and I'll say, "Those are mine!" and I'll throw my hand in between.  
And yet I'll look on at these things, but the things which the coverlets hide well,  
those will be my secret cause of fear.  
Do not fix your thigh to his thigh nor embrace his leg  
nor join your tender foot with his harsh foot.  
I, a wretch, fear many things, because I've done it all shamelessly,  
I, even I, am tortured by fear of my own example:  
often my and my mistress' hurried pleasure  
finished off a sweet work beneath a blanket thrown over us.  
You won't do this; but lest you be thought to have done it,  
take away that guilty blanket from your back.

Ovid threatens that if he loses complete control of the situation and his beloved (i.e., if she completely surrenders to her *vir*), he will recklessly point himself out as a lover to the *puella's vir*. McKeown notes that Ovid's threat here is an empty one, which is emphasized by *manifestus amator*, which "recalls the term *fur manifestus*, 'a thief caught in the act'..."<sup>54</sup> Ovid is always on the brink of being caught red-handed, but never is. The thrill of committing a risky, irredeemable act is what spurs the lover. In order for the *Amores* to be a successful set of poems, Ovid must soldier on as the tortured, thoroughly undermined lover. In line 39, Ovid ensnares himself: he uses a future more vivid conditional clause, which indicates the serious authority of his threats (i.e., his intention to act), but are immediately undermined by

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<sup>54</sup> McKeown (1989) 93.

the use of *manifestus*. They then become empty threats, and we see the mask slip a little. The use of this word betrays Ovid's noncommittal intent; he would never reveal himself.

Ovid tortures himself with the memories of past sexual encounters with the *puella*. But here she is named *domina*: she is the one who takes control in this passage. Yet their love-making is secretly and hastily done. And this sweet work (*opus*) is done under covered blankets (*veste iniecta*), which can be seen as another manifestation of Ovid's theme of dissimulation. His relationship with his *puella* is convoluted anyhow. He makes it more and more challenging for the readers attempting to decide what he intends to conceal and publicize. One indication of this confusion is Ovid's employment of a disjointed time frame. The audience remains uncertain as to whether they should assume that this education of sorts takes place before the actual dinner. It proves difficult when we attempt to imagine Ovid and the *puella* at this point. Later on in the poem, Ovid laments the things he has done with her (lines 45-50). Thus he prefers to keep his illicit relationship a secret, for that is what provides the thrill. Yet he also prefers not to know what the *puella* must submit to her *vir* behind closed doors. However, when both parties are present to Ovid, he prefers that the relationship between the two be public and not involve touching. Unfortunately both occasions distress Ovid. Miller notes that here is self-subverting irony: Ovid as lover fears what he has already done, which then becomes a paradox

of “honesty and cynicism.”<sup>55</sup> Yet Miller also adds that Ovid’s audience would have enjoyed the irony of the adulterer’s jealousy.<sup>56</sup>

One might also wish to consider how Ovid sets out to explore the literary standards of elegy. In line 44, the poet speaks of joining a tender foot to a hard foot (*nec tenerum duro cum pede iunge pedem*); one cannot help but think of the elegiac couplet: the tender foot (of Corinna, the mistress) consists of a dactylic pentameter line nestled under the hard foot (of the *vir*, the rival), written in a line of dactylic hexameter. Elegy was considered to be of inferior style in respect to epic. Take, for instance, the very beginning of *Amores* 1.1.1-4:

*Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam  
edere, materia conveniente modis.  
par erat inferior versus; risisse Cupido  
dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.*

Arms in heavy meter and violent wars,  
with the subject matter agreeing with the rhythm –  
that’s what I was getting ready to write about.  
The lower verse was equal; I swore I heard Cupid’s  
laughter as he stole away a foot.

Thus from the very beginning of the *Amores*, Ovid attempts to emphasize and extol its assumed shortcomings by using descriptions such as the ‘hard’ meter of epic and the ‘tender’ meter of elegy. ‘Hard’ could also include a sense of seriousness in regard to its subject matter while ‘soft’ elegy embraces a lighter approach. Satisfied though he may be with this genre for the moment, one wonders when reading line 46 of *Amores* 1.4 (*exemplique metu torqueor ipse mei*) if there may be a double entendre; Ovid could be voicing some concern about others surpassing himself in his own

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<sup>55</sup> Miller (2004) 45-8.

<sup>56</sup> Miller (2004) 35-6.

elevated and innovative literary standards. This is where the readers might be viewed as potential rivals; Ovid fears that they will read his poetry and overshadow him. This may be the reason why Ovid makes ambiguity an essential mode of approaching his *Amores*. Yet, he appears to be exposing himself to the reader and in a way challenges them to read his veiled thoughts. Thus the identities Ovid describes are both exposed for readers to “see” and blurred enough so as to give rise to doubt. Everyone knows that a sweet work hidden under a blanket is not really hidden.

Ovid also subverts his authority in 1.4.51-70:

*vir bibat usque roga (precibus tamen oscula desint), 51*  
*dumque bibit, furtim, si potes, adde merum.*  
*si bene conpositus somno vinoque iacebit,*  
*consilium nobis resque locusque dabunt.*  
*cum surges abitura domum, surgemus et omnes, 55*  
*in medium turbae fac memor agmen eas:*  
*agmine me invenies aut invenieris in illo;*  
*quidquid ibi poteris tangere, tange, mei.*  
*me miserum! monui, paucas quod prosit in horas;*  
*separor a domina nocte iubente mea. 60*  
*nocte vir includet; lacrimis ego maestus obortis,*  
*qua licet, ad saevas prosequar usque fores.*  
*oscula iam sumet, iam non tantum oscula sumet:*  
*quod mihi das furtim, iura coacta dabis.*  
*verum invita dato (potes hoc) similisque coactae: 65*  
*blanditiae taceant sitque maligna Venus.*  
*si mea vota valent, illum quoque ne iuvet opto;*  
*si minus, at certe te iuvet inde nihil.*  
*sed quaecumque tamen noctem fortuna sequetur,*  
*cras mihi constanti voce dedisse nega. 70*

Ask your man to keep on drinking constantly  
 (that said, may your kisses be absent from your prayers!),  
 while he drinks up, secretly add a bit of pure wine, if you can.  
 If he lies there, thoroughly sedated from sleep and wine,  
 circumstance and place will give us advice.  
 When you rise, about to leave for home, let us all rise too,  
 remember to walk into the middle of the crowd:  
 you'll find me or you'll be found in that crowd;  
 whatever you're able to touch of me, touch it.  
 Poor me! I advised what would be useful for a few hours;  
 I'm separated from my mistress with night forbidding.  
 Her man shuts her up; I, somber, with tears welling,  
 where it is permitted, I'd escort her all the way up to the cruel doors.

First he'll take up kisses, then he'll take up not only kisses:  
whatever you give to me secretly, you will give to him only as forced by law:  
yes, give them unwillingly (you can manage this) and as if you were forced:  
may compliments fall silent and Venus contrived.  
If my prayers have any power, I wish that he not take pleasure too;  
if not at least that, you certainly shouldn't take any pleasure.  
But, nevertheless, whatever fate shall follow during the night,  
deny to me tomorrow, in a steady voice, that you surrendered!

Even though he orders his girl not to hide her body underneath a coverlet with her *vir*, Ovid contradicts himself as *praeceptor amoris* when he tells her to deny the details of last night. Barsby adds that in hindsight this last couplet affects the way the entire poem is read and that

up to this point we have a credible picture of a lover faced with an established rival, of his underlying tenderness, his flashes of optimism, his jealousy, his almost neurotic anxiety and suspicion: the last couplet destroys his credibility, for a lover thus involved with his mistress could scarcely be content with a false denial. We may conclude that Ovid is in all probability not writing for a mistress at all but for his readers: he has taken a standard literary situation, added some new ideas of his own to the stock ones, and created an amusing and at times sensual poem.<sup>57</sup>

In lines 61ff., Ovid, now an *exclusus amator*, displays the limits of his authority as *praeceptor amoris*. Even though the girl may have sexual relations with the rival, he demands that her voice must remain loyal to Ovid.<sup>58</sup> Such a demand appears as vain upon our consideration that he does not give the *puella* a voice with which she can speak; the only time when she can speak to Ovid is when they are alone. Yet when he describes the two of them in an intimate setting, all alone, talking is not one of his preferred pursuits.

The word *cras* is also important in understanding Ovid's manifold poetic and elegiac identity. As lover, he may not have his mistress that night, but he will tomorrow. McKeown notes that "the introduction of this consolation here

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<sup>57</sup> Barsby (1973) 65.

<sup>58</sup> McKeown (1989) 102.

somewhat undercuts the tone of despair which has pervaded the poem so far.”<sup>59</sup> Here, the deceiver prays to be deceived. This is a role reversal which illustrates the inversion of normal Roman values. Ovid, as Miller states, does this by depicting the *puella*, under legal obligation, giving kisses to her man; the ones that she gives to Ovid are stolen (if we are to assume she is legally obligated in some way to the *vir*), yet are given freely by her. Miller notes that Ovid is “portraying transgression as freedom and the law as the site of coercion and implicit violence. Ovid’s own bid to assert legal ownership, in line 40 (*et dicam ‘mea sunt’ iniciamque manum*), however, undercuts his already shaky moral authority.”<sup>60</sup> Upon a second reading of this poem, the reader may still find it difficult interpret Ovid’s intent of futurity; he in fact leaves it ambiguous as to whether he means only tomorrow or for subsequent situations where this problem may occur. Yet we must consider that without the presence of the rival and the denials from his girl, Ovid the lover would have a difficult time searching for ways to describe his torment.

#### ***IV. The Triumph of the Poet***

The affected characters in this poem include Ovid (as lover, teacher, and poet), the *puella*, and the rivals (both *vir* & audience). Ovid, as both teacher and lover, does not seem to be able to control the situation, much to his chagrin; he can have his *puella* at certain times, as is alluded to, but she always ends up going back to the *vir*. Here, the girl is caught in the middle. She is surely not a victim (at least not completely), probably because we do not read of any emotion of hers that indicates

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<sup>59</sup> McKeown (1989) 102.

<sup>60</sup> Miller (2002) 253.

helplessness. Ovid teaches her his love tricks, but his instructions appear most often in the form of orders, or imperatives; it must be assumed that she follows them. Later, during the late hours of the night, she is locked up by her *vir* and must submit to *his* desires. Despite her seemingly absent lack of dominance over either of her partners, perhaps she is the double-crosser. The *puella* is the one who knows the secrets: she sends secret love messages to Ovid, betraying her intelligence. Thus, during this dinner party she has the ability to secretly rebel against her *vir* and has power over her frustrated lover, who cannot openly declare himself as her lover. She also possesses the knowledge of what Ovid cannot bear to hear: her submissions to her *vir* each night when she is shut inside. Ovid does not want to hear of what she must submit to, but even not hearing about it is torture. Ovid, however, wins in the end: the *puella* is objectified, devoid of personality and individuality. Though given the chance to express herself using the secret signs Ovid taught her, we the audience never see them used. She is given no direct speech and her features are hazy. Though Ovid has successfully undermined himself as a teacher of love and as lover, he succeeds in drawing a clearer picture of his own poetic identity. This failure is the triumph of Ovid as poet in that he turns the suffering lover and inept teacher into a form of entertainment.



## CHAPTER 3

### I. Unstable personae in Amores 2.5

Ovid presented himself as apt teacher and tricky (but thwarted) lover in Amores 1.4, but in Amores 2.5, the poet paints himself as the tortured, duped lover and failed *praeceptor amoris*. Ovid's didactic intentions are undermined when we learn that in Amores 2.5 Corinna has found a better teacher than Ovid; she is successful in that she has learned from Ovid and has built upon that knowledge. However he tried to control her every word and thought in 1.4, Ovid is not able to prevent Corinna from having the freedom to learn from whomever she wants. Ovid appears as a covetous voyeur as he watches Corinna engaging in sexual exploits with another<sup>61</sup> and has violent intentions. He fails in the end and succumbs to his fears of another man, a master (*quis magister*, line 62), taking over (*alter*, line 53). As a now-passive observer, Ovid, a self-proclaimed teacher of love, is now much like the reader-voyeurs of this poem watching helplessly as the *puella* flirts with another—thus proof of Ovid's own unstable identity.

Corinna<sup>62</sup> stars as a talented student who has built up her repertoire of *furta praecepta amoris* learned from Ovid. In Amores 1.4, we learn that Corinna was more of a naïve lover of Ovid's, ready to learn all of the secret tricks. Yet, everything is turned on its head in Amores 2.5 when Corinna, very much knowledgeable of deceitful tricks, continues to learn more and uses this education against Ovid. As we

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<sup>61</sup> Hence the voyeuristic language, which shall be addressed later in this chapter.

<sup>62</sup> Corinna not named, but it is confirmed in the commentaries of both Booth (1991) and Miller that (2002) it is, in fact, Corinna. From here on out I shall refer to her as thus unless otherwise noted.

read further in the poem, we might ask if Corinna's identity is equally or even more unstable than in *Amores* 1.4. I plan to explore and attempt to answer this question in this chapter. Nevertheless, by the end of *Amores* 2.5, Corinna is by no means done with learning; Ovid alludes to another teacher of hers. Corinna is involved in three different mythological exempla, either describing her actions or appearance. In *Amores* 2.5, Corinna continues to be an unstable character because we the readers are unsure of her success in deceiving Ovid (or other men, for that matter) and who she is (i.e., there are limited descriptions of her).

Assumedly after the dinner party, the rival *vir* from *Amores* 1.4 wins and locks away the *puella* and sleeps with her. Yet in *Amores* 2.5, the rival disappears from the dinner party; but the end of the poem reintroduces an (another?) unnamed rival, a master teacher of love who has taught Corinna even more. Though this rival plays a smaller part in *Amores* 2.5 than the rival did in *Amores* 1.4, his presence is still troublesome for both Ovid and the reader. For example, the poet does not indicate whether this mysterious rival is the same *vir* described in *Amores* 1.4; whether he is or not, Ovid never identifies him as such. The only point of reference of the rival's identity is when Ovid calls him *quis magister* in line 62. The identity of the rival appears as the most unstable simply in the fact that we are unsure of how to define him or what to name him. In *Amores* 2.5, the rival is locked in kisses with Corinna-- something which Ovid could not do in *Amores* 1.4. However, when Ovid objects, the rival mysteriously disappears in order for Ovid focus more on describing Corinna's

conduct and appearance and also his own emotions. The rival makes one more cameo in the end of the poem as one last threat to Ovid.

## **II. Suspicious Voyeurism**

Ovid, the exasperated lover describes exaggerated behavior typical of elegy in lines 1-4:

*nullus amor tanti est (abeas, pharetrate Cupido),  
ut mihi sint totiens maxima vota mori.  
vota mori mea sunt, cum te peccasse recordor,  
ei mihi, perpetuum nata puella malum!*

No love is worth it – go away, quiver-carrying Cupid! –  
That so many times my utmost prayers would be of death.<sup>63</sup>  
My prayers are of death, upon remembering that you sinned,  
Oh girl, born as my immortal evil!

These lines are evidence of the lover's vacillating and ambivalent feelings for Corinna;<sup>64</sup> they immediately bring to mind *Amores* 1.4, where Ovid instructs the *puella* to deceive the *vir*. However in *Amores* 2.5, Ovid exchanges the role of the illicit lover for that of the *vir*.<sup>65</sup> As further evidence of Ovid's wavering affections for Corinna, Miller notes that the opening couplet is a paradox: the word *totiens*

immediately signals that the lover's subsequent protestation should be viewed with suspicion. For if he has made such vows frequently, then how seriously should they be taken? Moreover, if he has made them repeatedly we can assume they have not always been made to the same person.<sup>66</sup>

Ovid, once the illicit lover and teacher of love and one who reveled in secrecy and tricks (in *Amores* 1.4), now declares Corinna an unfaithful lover and a sinner. In effect, Ovid's use of the word *peccasse* is paradoxical. In *Amores* 1.4, Ovid begs

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<sup>63</sup> Literally: "to die."

<sup>64</sup> Booth (1991) 38.

<sup>65</sup> Booth (1991) 38.

<sup>66</sup> Miller (2002) 255.

Corinna to deny her sexual exploits with the rival, the unnamed *vir*; in doing so, Ovid indicated that there was no difference between Corinna showing actual fidelity and Ovid being persuaded that Corinna is faithful. However, the case for *Amores* 2.5 is not quite the same. In fact, Ovid presents this poem as a court case where he adopts the *personae* of both prosecutor and defender. As prosecutor, he uses words such as *peccasse* to denigrate Corinna; yet later, as defender, he manages to forget Corinna's transgressions and helplessly falls victim to her beauty once more.

Our poet continues language of deception in this poem. In the following lines it is Ovid who is, as in *Amores* 1.4, cheated:

<i>non mihi deceptae nudant tua facta tabellae</i>	5
<i>nec data furtiva munera crimen habent.</i>	
<i>o utinam arguerem sic, ut non vincere possem!</i>	
<i>me miserum, quare tam bona causa mea est?</i>	
<i>felix, qui quod amat defendere fortiter audet,</i>	
<i>cui sua 'non feci' dicere amica potest.</i>	10
<i>ferreus est nimiumque suo favet ille dolori,</i>	
<i>cui petitur victa palma cruenta rea.</i>	
<i>ipse miser vidi, cum me dormire putares,</i>	
<i>sobrius apposito crimina vestra mero:</i>	
<i>multa supercilio vidi vibrante loquentes;</i>	15
<i>nutibus in vestris pars bona vocis erat.</i>	
<i>non oculi tacuere tui conscriptaque vino</i>	
<i>mensa, nec in digitis littera nulla fuit.</i>	
<i>sermonem agnovi, quod non videatur, agentem</i>	
<i>verbaque pro certis iussa valere notis.</i>	20
<i>iamque frequens ierat mensa conviva relict;</i>	
<i>compositi iuvenes unus et alter erant:</i>	
<i>inproba tum vero iungentes oscula vidi</i>	
<i>(illa mihi lingua nexa fuisse liquet),</i>	
...	
<i>'quid facis?' exclamo 'quo nunc mea gaudia defers?</i>	
<i>iniciam dominas in mea iura manus.</i>	30
<i>haec tibi sunt mecum, mihi sunt communia tecum:</i>	
<i>in bona cur quisquam tertius ista venit?'</i>	

The camouflaged writing tablets do not lay bare to me your actions,  
nor are secretly given gifts the crime.  
Oh I wish that I would plead my case in such a way that I might not be able to win!  
Poor me! Why is my case so good?  
Happy is he who he is prepared to defend bravely what he loves,

whose own sweetheart is able to say, "Not guilty!"  
 That man is cruel and favors indignation beyond measure,  
 who seeks a blood-stained palm with his guilty girl defeated.  
 I, a sober wretch, saw your crimes,  
 when you thought I was asleep from the wine placed near:  
 I saw you both speaking many a message from your flickering eyebrow:  
 a good part of your voice was in your nods.  
 Your eyes weren't silent and nor was the table written in wine silent,  
 nor was there no letter on your fingers.  
 I recognized speech doing that which might go unseen,  
 and words charged to stand for certain agreed-upon meanings.  
 And then many a guest left the table empty;  
 there remained one or two drowsy youths:  
 then I truly saw you joining in sinful kisses  
 (those were French kisses, that was clear to me)  
 ...  
 "What are you doing?" I cry out, "Where now are you spreading my joys?  
 I claim jurisdiction over my lady.  
 These things of yours are shared with me, mine with you:  
 why is some third person entitled to my damned property?"

It was not from incriminating wax tablets or secret gifts that he discovered Corinna's infidelity; Ovid states, as if in a court case, that the only proof of Corinna's infidelity is an eyewitness, himself. Yet he's cold-hearted if he seeks to win his case, but kind if he overlooks his girl's infidelity. In lines 7-8, Ovid has proof of Corinna's crime more compelling than she could easily deny. Booth notes that the humor is that a lawyer's case cannot be too good, but Ovid simply wishes to be deceived—a wish similar to that of *Amores* 1.4.<sup>67</sup> By overlooking her infidelity (by not claiming to be a witness) Ovid could then, like the man in lines 9-10, be prepared to defend her. Booth also notes the witty inappropriate use of the word *felix*, which is commonly found in "heroic and solemn contexts."<sup>68</sup> Perhaps this word (*felix*) foreshadows the epic-inspired similes to follow (see below). In lines 11-12, Ovid condemns the man who vindictively attempts to prove his girl's unfaithfulness; as a result of these attempts

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<sup>67</sup> Miller (2002) 256.

<sup>68</sup> Booth (1991) 119. For the heroic and solemn contexts, cf. Verg. G. ii.480.

comes the metaphor—for the victory, the loser pays a considerable price (*palma cruenta*), which was the mark of victory in a sporting event.<sup>69</sup>

Ovid becomes the spectator. Miller thoughtfully asks:

was Ovid pretending to sleep so that he might catch Corinna *in flagrante delicto* or had he dozed off due to wine and the lateness of hour? The poet claims to have been *sobrius*, but simultaneously notes that the wine has been served.<sup>70</sup>

The claim of being sober, yet being served wine, is yet another example of Ovid's ambiguous language. He recognizes the same tricks he and she or someone like her used (as in *Amores* 1.4).<sup>71</sup> Corinna uses the same tricks to talk with the rival and Ovid sees the result of those tricks: Corinna and his rival are locking lips.

Ovid objects in anger and protests that Corinna is *his* property. Booth notes that the abrupt switch to direct speech is

coupled with the use of the historic present recharges the atmosphere with tension after a lull brought about by artistic digression in 25-8. But Ovid's high indignation is really just a joke, for here, in the role of the *vir*, he does exactly what he threatens to do in the role of the *amator* at *Am.* 1.4.39-40, if his mistress kisses her official escort instead of him.<sup>72</sup>

In indignation, he claims that no third party should have a share of his joys (*gaudia*).<sup>73</sup> He angrily asks for his property—not his mistress, but the kisses. Booth notes that there is an amusing absurdity in treating something as short-lived as a kiss as stolen property which could be regained by citing stern legal procedures.<sup>74</sup>

Ovid is much like the *vir* from *Amores* 1.4, except he's suspicious, tortured by his suspicions, and deceived. Ovid wears a mask of the angry *vir*, but it falls to reveal

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<sup>69</sup> Booth (1991) 119.

<sup>70</sup> Miller (2002) 257.

<sup>71</sup> Booth (1991) 119 notes that it is a "verbal as well as visual code that has evidently been agreed upon."

<sup>72</sup> Booth (1991) 120.

<sup>73</sup> Miller (2002) 257. On *gaudia* as orgasm, see *Tib.* 1.5.39-40.

<sup>74</sup> Booth (1991) 121.

that of the frustrated lover who is helpless in his anger. His undermined indignation is all too appropriate upon considering that in Book 1 Ovid introduces us to Corinna and Ovid's playful take on elegy, yet in Book 2, upon exploration of the hazards of sexual relationships (usually at his own expense), he is revealed as Miller says, to be "feckless, manipulative, and self-deceiving."<sup>75</sup>

Since Ovid has switched roles with the *vir* from *Amores* 1.4, as an angry *vir-ile* character, Ovid attempts to reflect this role inversion with the use of legal language. What is most significant is Ovid's heavy use of legal vocabulary in *Amores* 2.5: *crimen* (6), *liquet* in the impersonal (24), *in bona... venit, bona* (32),<sup>76</sup> *defers* (29, a semi-technical term often used in legal contexts), and *iniciam... manus* (30). Booth states that the use of *iniciam... manus* is an "echo of a formula used by plaintiff in *manus iniectio*, an archaic legal enactment *apud praetorem* associated with the ancient process of *vindicatio*, by which one man might reclaim his rightful property from another."<sup>77</sup> Ovid's use of juristic language shows his indignation at Corinna's infidelity, but more so his indignation like that of an angry husband.

### **III. Why is story so good?**

Ovid's poetical abilities are also displayed when, just after he bemoans the fact that his skill in telling his story is good (*Me miserum! Quare tam bona causa mea est?*, line 8), he delivers intricate mythological *exempla*. The first *exemplum* describes

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<sup>75</sup> Miller (2002) 255.

<sup>76</sup> OLD s.v. 10 states that *venit* + *in* + *acc* is translated as "to become legally entitled to possession."

<sup>77</sup> Booth (1991) 120-1. The same phrase is also in *Amores* 1.4.40.

Corinna's actions with the rival. In her sinful kisses with her lover, Ovid makes the following comparison in lines 25-8:

qualia non fratri tulerit germana severo, 25  
sed tulerit cupido mollis amica viro;  
qualia credibile est non Phoebo ferre Dianam,  
sed Venerem Marti saepe tulisse suo.

A sister wouldn't bear those sorts of kisses to a stern brother,  
But girlfriend would tenderly to her eager lover;  
It's inconceivable that Diana bear such things to Phoebus,  
But it is that Venus would often bore them to her own Mars.

Corinna is molded into a simile, a mythological *exemplum*. Her identity is confined to whatever Ovid says about her, which is minimal. Corinna kisses her new *vir* with the pleasure of a lover, not a family member related by blood. However, the tables have been turned: the words *cupido viro* (26) recall *Amores* 1.4. They undermine Ovid's authority as teacher-lover: *he* used to be the desirous lover, but now another (elegiac?) lover (albeit not the same *vir* from *Amores* 1.4) becomes the competition. Despite the undermining of his role as both teacher and lover with the use of this simile, Ovid increases his authority as poet: this is his inspiration for writing elegy.

Both Miller and Booth comment that Diana, virgin goddess of chastity, is a good example of a *germana* kissing her brother (i.e., the example of Diana reinforces Ovid's objections to Corinna kissing another).<sup>78</sup> Miller also notes that the kisses of Venus and Mars are not only sensual, but adulterous.<sup>79</sup> Ovid refers to the Homeric version of how Hephaestus caught Venus and Mars together several times (cf. *Am.* 1.9.40, *Ars.* 2.561, *Met.* 4.189). Perhaps the Homeric version of this myth anticipates the following similes in lines 33-43, when Corinna blushes with shame at Ovid's

<sup>78</sup> Miller (2002) 257 and Booth (1991) 120.

<sup>79</sup> Miller (2002) 257.



objections to her infidelity. As further proof of this (adultery-related) simile's connection to epic, Booth states that *qualia... qualia* is the “commonest comparative particle for introducing purely decorative catalogues of similes and those intended to carry the reader into realms of romantic fancy.”<sup>80</sup>

Ovid's long string of similes refers to both Corinna's action (i.e., her blush) and physical description (i.e., the way she looked when she blushes). Not much later, though, Ovid does describe Corinna displaying a possibly feigned shame after Ovid objects to her kissing the rival in lines 33-42:

<i>haec ego, quaeque dolor linguae dictavit; at illi</i>	
<i>conscia purpureus venit in ora pudor.</i>	
<i>quale coloratum Tithoni coniuge caelum</i>	35
<i>subrupet, aut sponso visa puella novo;</i>	
<i>quale rosae fulgent inter sua lilia mixtae</i>	
<i>aut, ubi cantatis, Luna, laborat equis;</i>	
<i>aut quod, ne longis flavescere possit ab annis,</i>	
<i>Maeonis Assyrium femina tinxit ebur:</i>	40
<i>hic erat aut alicui color ille simillimus horum,</i>	
<i>et numquam visu pulchrior illa fuit.</i>	

I had just spoken these things, such as indignation dictated to my tongue;  
but scarlet shame surfaced on that girl's guilty face,  
Like the sky, painted by the wife of Tithonus,  
is tinged with red or a young woman seen by her new bridegroom;  
like how roses flush, mixed among lilies,  
or when the Moon works her horses when they're enchanted,  
or Indian ivory Lydian women stain  
so that it might not yellow from many a long year.  
That was the color of her face—or something like it,  
and never was that woman more beautiful to behold.

The word *dictavit*, literally “to dictate, prescribe, order”,<sup>81</sup> is a manifestation of Ovid's poetic craft. This is proven in line 35, where Corinna's action (i.e., her kissing) meshes with a physical description of her. As the simile in *Amores* 1.4 is focused mainly on the *puella*, these similes likewise focus on Corinna and show Ovid to be the observer (i.e.,

<sup>80</sup> Booth (1991) 120.

<sup>81</sup> OLD s.v. *dicto* 3.

he describes her blush, which he sees). The poet manages to leave out the distinct attributes of Corinna and focuses solely on her blush (the only tangible feature of hers in this poem); this leaves room for Ovid to wax poetic (i.e., show off). While on the one hand it is suitable for Vergil to describe Lavinia's "blush of virginal modesty" in *Aeneid* 12 (to be discussed later), on the other hand, Booth notes that it is quite "inappropriate for Ovid to wax lyrical on his flirtatious mistress' blush of guilt. And this is no doubt precisely why he does it: he found the humour of the incongruity irresistible."<sup>82</sup> The result of these two blushes (the ones described in Ovid and Vergil) is the same: both men (Ovid and Turnus, respectively) who observe the blushes are filled with desire.<sup>83</sup>

Miller indicates that this couplet represents a turning point in *Amores* 2.5. Ovid's anger was successful enough to elicit a blush from his beloved, which only further kindles his passion.<sup>84</sup> By invoking Aurora and the reddening of the sky, Booth notes that it is an "extremely felicitous Ovidian coinage to evoke both the flush of dawn starting at the horizon and a human blush starting at the neck."<sup>85</sup> By addressing Aurora, the dawn, as the "wife of Tithonus" (*Tithoni coniuge*) Ovid calls attention to her own peculiar yet unlucky marriage:<sup>86</sup> Aurora married Tithonus, originally a mortal, who was granted immortality, but not the everlasting youth that so often accompanies it—decrepitude overcomes him. The Aurora simile is

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<sup>82</sup> Booth (1991) 121.

<sup>83</sup> Booth (1991) 121.

<sup>84</sup> Miller (2002) 257.

<sup>85</sup> Booth (1991) 121. Even though Ovid does not mention a blush moving from the neck to the face, it is nonetheless a fitting description.

<sup>86</sup> For her marriage see *Am.* 1.13-35-8, *Prop.* 2.18, *h. Hom. Ven.* 218-38 and cf. *Met.* 6.46-9, where the dawn simile also describes a shameful blush.

contrasted with the description of a young girl looked at by her newly betrothed husband. Miller states that the young bride simile provides an appropriate rhetorical antithesis and that the ironic contrast between the betrothed girl's modest blush and Corinna's shameful one makes the simile cheeky, but doubly effective.<sup>87</sup> As for the white lilies among the roses, Booth argues that this simile better evokes the redness of the blush on white skin.<sup>88</sup>

The laboring of the moon is used (*laborare* and *labor*), Miller adds, of an eclipse, during which it usually grows red; eclipses were thought to be connected to witchcraft (*cantatis... equis*).<sup>89</sup> Booth further illuminates that

the moon, the sun, and personified celestial phenomena such as Night and Dawn are conventionally endowed with horses and chariot in Greek and Roman art and literature. The moon's horses are here said to be 'bewitched' when she is in eclipse because any irregularity in course or appearance of a heavenly body in antiquity was commonly believed to be result of black magic.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to the eclipse of the moon is the comparison of Corinna's blush to the Indian ivory stained by Lydian women, which recalls Homer's *Iliad* 4.141-7, in a much different context:

Ὡς δ' ὅτε τίς τ' ἐλέφαντα γυνὴ φοίνικι μίγνῃ  
Μηονίς ἢ Κάρια παρήϊον ἔμμεναι ἵππων·  
κεῖται δ' ἐν θαλάμῳ, πολέες τέ μιν ἡρήσαντο  
ἵππῃες φορέειν· βασιλῆϊ δὲ κεῖται ἄγαλμα,  
ἀμφότερον κόσμος θ' ἵππῳ ἐλατῆρί τε κῦδος·

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And like when a Maeonian or Carian woman stains ivory  
with crimson to be a cheek piece for horses;  
And it lies in a treasure chamber, and though many  
horsemen pray to possess it; but, as a king's prize, it lies there,

<sup>87</sup> Miller (2002) 257.

<sup>88</sup> Booth (1991) 122. Booth also adds that "Roman thought lilies & roses 'went' together; see Plin. *Nat.* xxi. 22 et interpositum (*lilium*) etiam maxime rosas decet."

<sup>89</sup> Miller (2002) 257. cf. Prop. 2.34.52, Ver. G. 2.478, or for more examples of moon eclipses see ThLL 7.793.16ff.

<sup>90</sup> Booth (1991) 122-23.

as ornament for both horse and driver and glory;<sup>91</sup>

In this simile, Athena protects Menelaus from getting a mortal wound from Lycaon's (a Trojan) arrow, which grazes his skin and causes dark blood to flow from said wound. Since this simile is from a different context, it is made absurd in an elegiac setting: Ovid, wanting to possess his girl is a sort of Menelaus, who fights a war of his own to retrieve his abducted wife, Helen from Paris. Yet Ovid does not fight in an actual war to win over his girl, instead he fights an elegiac one. Not long before his injury, Menelaus was involved in a one-on-one combat with Paris, before he much like the rival, mysteriously disappears. Like Ovid, he may lose battles but ends up winning the war over the girl (the stained ivory, 40). Ovid, fighting a bloodless war of love, possesses his girl in a way, too: although he suffers in his poems as a lover, it is his ultimately choice as a poet in how he chooses to manipulate not only descriptions of her, but her very identity and his own. Also this simile casts Ovid's rival as a Paris-type lover; though involved with a beautiful woman, both the rival and Paris fail to control and possess her. And once more we may recall, like the presence of Cupid in *Amores* 2.5, the involvement of another love-inducing god, Aphrodite, who is the cause of the entire war.

On a small note, as this Homeric simile suggests, ivory must have been dyed for decoration, not preservation.<sup>92</sup> This simile, however influential, is merely an echo in Ovid's simile in lines 39-40 (i.e., it does not determine how Ovid will use the tinted ivory simile). Homer's simile focuses more on reddened ivory as decoration for horses,

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<sup>91</sup> Monro and Allen (1966) OCT.

<sup>92</sup> Booth (1991) 123. Also interesting point that Booth includes is that Ovid uses the Homeric transliteration of the Homeric word *Maeonis*.

and it is difficult to imagine how Menelaus' flesh wound would be similar to Corinna's blush (other than the color itself). But perhaps this is not what we need to address. One conceivable reason Ovid evokes this simile is not to imitate it directly; he is doing it in order to recall those heroic Iliadic characters and make them seem absurd in an elegiac context.

Miller notes that to illuminate further this simile (of Am. 2.4.33-42) we might recall the blush of Lavinia in *Aeneid* 12.64-70 and its effect on Turnus.<sup>93</sup>

*accepit vocem lacrimis Lavinia matris  
 fragrantis perfusa genas, cui plurimus ignem                      65  
 subiecit rubor et calefacta per ora cucurrit.  
 Indum sanguineo veluti violaverit ostro  
 si quis ebur, aut mixta rubent ubi lilia multa  
 alba rosa, talis virgo dabat ore colores.  
 illum turbat amor figitque in virgine vultus;<sup>94</sup>                      70*

Lavinia heard her mother's voice,  
 Wetting her burning cheeks with tears, whose deep  
 blush revealed vibrancy and sped through her warm face.  
 Just as if someone stained Indian ivory with crimson dye,  
 Or when white lilies blush mingled with crowds of roses,  
 such were the colors the girl radiated from her face.  
 Love unsettled that man and he set his gaze on the girl;

Line 37 of *Amores* 2.5 is a nearly direct quote of *Aeneid* 12.67-8 and the mention of stained ivory in line 40 suggests *Aeneid* 12.66-7. Ovid's use of Vergilian echoes "travesties the heroic with the erotic absurd."<sup>95</sup> Coincidentally, just as in *Amores* 2.5, in *Aeneid* 12.70, Turnus speaks about the Dawn riding in her crimson chariot, reddening the sky, and proposes a one-on-one duel with Aeneas.<sup>96</sup> Even later Turnus, driven to a frenzy by the furies, emitting glowing sparks from his face and fire from

<sup>93</sup> Booth (1991) 123.

<sup>94</sup> Mynor's (1969) OCT.

<sup>95</sup> Miller (2002). 257. For further Vergilian echoes, cf. *Amores* 1.1.1, 1.2.29-36.

<sup>96</sup> *Aen.* 12.76-80: (the end of Turnus' speech) *cum primum crastina caelo / puniceis inuecta rotis Aurora rubebit, / non Teucros agat in Rutulos, Teucrum arma quiescent / et Rutuli; nostro dirimamus sanguine bellum, / illo quaeratur coniunx Lauinia campo.*

his eyes.<sup>97</sup> Like Ovid, Turnus loses his beloved (and dies). This could be one suitable explanation for Ovid's wishes of death in lines 1-3. Like Ovid, Turnus is incensed at losing his girl (technically bride-to-be), his property, and like the rival, Aeneas whisks her away after winning a long, hard-fought war. Instead of Juno's interference in affairs as in those of Aeneas and Turnus, Cupid is involved, which may explain Ovid's scorn of this god at the beginning of *Amores* 2.5.

Perhaps Ovid had another reason for Corinna's blush scene; Ovid switches from a Turnus-like character to an Aeneas: instead of seeing Pallas' belt, evidence of his dear friend's death, he sees Corinna and his rival kissing, evidence of Corinna's infidelity. Seeing red, Ovid prepares to hit his girl, and this is where the blushing simile occurs. The poet then finds another way to undermine himself as lover: instead of taking revenge and getting rid of his enemy, the rival simply disappears. As Turnus and Aeneas whet their souls for war and fan their anger, Ovid thus wages a bloodless battle of love not only against the rival, but himself. And, as if in a bad dream such as that of Turnus (when he fails to strike Aeneas with a massive rock),<sup>98</sup> Ovid includes no final showdown with his rival and manages to distort time by leaving out important details, which leave the reader asking questions: "Where has the rival gone? When Corinna and Ovid are together, are they still at the dinner party or elsewhere, in comfortable privacy?" Ovid never answers these questions and purposely leaves the situation ambiguous.

What do the multiple similes accomplish? With both Homeric and Vergilian

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<sup>97</sup> Aen. 12.101-2: *his agitur furiis, totoque ardentis ab ore / scintillae absistunt, oculis micat acribus ignis.*

<sup>98</sup> Aen. 12.906-914.

echoes, Ovid's own simile becomes complex and multilayered.<sup>99</sup> By comparing Corinna to so many things, her identity becomes convoluted and even less stable than in *Amores* 1.4. Miller plausibly argues that in lines 41-2, the "hexameter is a wonderfully self-subverting acknowledgement of the excessive nature of Ovid's rhetorical elaboration."<sup>100</sup> Thus, this simile not only undermines Ovid the lover and teacher, but also Ovid as poet.

#### IV. A better teacher?

As noted earlier, the presence and essence of the rival himself has grown complicated upon consideration of our first encounter with him in the beginning of the poem, when he is seen (by Ovid) kissing Corinna (23-24). The rival is further complicated upon our consideration of the final passage, the very end of the poem, lines 43-62:

<i>spectabat terram—terram spectare decebat;</i>	
<i>maesta erat in vultu—maesta decenter erat.</i>	
<i>sicut erant (et erant culti) laniare capillos</i>	45
<i>et fuit in teneras impetus ire genas;</i>	
<i>ut faciem vidi, fortes cecidere lacerti:</i>	
<i>defensa est armis nostra puella suis.</i>	
<i>qui modo saevus eram, supplex ultroque rogavi</i>	
<i>oscula ne nobis deteriora daret.</i>	50
<i>risit et ex animo dedit optima, qualia possent</i>	
<i>excudere irato tela trisulca Iovi:</i>	
<i>torqueor infelix, ne tam bona senserit alter,</i>	
<i>et volo non ex hac illa fuisse nota.</i>	
<i>haec quoque, quam docui, multo meliora fuerunt,</i>	55
<i>et quiddam visa est addidicisse novi.</i>	
<i>quod nimium placuere, malum est, quod tota labellis</i>	
<i>lingua tua est nostris, nostra recepta tuis.</i>	
<i>nec tamen hoc unum doleo, non oscula tantum</i>	
<i>iuncta queror, quamvis haec quoque iuncta queror:</i>	60
<i>illa nisi in lecto nusquam potuere doceri;</i>	
<i>nescioquis pretium grande magister habet.</i>	

<sup>99</sup> Miller (2002) 257.

<sup>100</sup> Miller (2002) 257.

She kept looking at the ground—it was fitting for her to stare at the ground;  
 There was sadness on her face—sadness was fitting.  
 It was as if blind fury urged me on to tear out her hair,  
 refined as it was, and to tear at her tender cheeks;  
 when I looked at her beauty, my forceful vigor died:  
 my girl was fortified by her own arms.  
 I who was just now savage, as a suppliant voluntarily asked  
 that she wouldn't give me worse kisses.  
 She giggled with liveliness and gave excellent ones, the sort that could  
 shake loose angry Jove's three-pronged bolt:  
 unhappy, I am tormented, lest another experience such pleasure,  
 And I wished they weren't of that sort of quality.  
 These were a great deal better than the ones I taught  
 And she seems to have learned something new in addition.  
 What pleases too much is bad, like when your whole tongue  
 is admitted by my lips, and mine by yours.  
 Yet I'm not worried about only this—I'm not only complaining about joined mouths,  
 I'm also complaining about whatever else is joined too:  
 she could have been taught nowhere but in bed.  
 Some sort of master has the grand prize.

Yet again does the presence of a third person complicate the situation. What is interesting is that his presence is not a physical one (i.e., he is not there when Ovid and Corinna are together). Booth argues that Ovid unrealistically describes, in a single uninterrupted string of events, both the banquet scene and the conciliatory kiss scene, which “does not even allow for the departure of the embarrassed paramour, for they indicate that the poet's tirade lasted for some time, during which the unfortunate *amator* might easily be imagined making his escape (in the Adultery Mime he would have have leapt through the window.”<sup>101</sup> While the identity of this teacher is not quite clear, his (non-physical) presence is nonetheless threatening and it subverts Ovid's authority as teacher and lover.

There is opened up the likelihood that Corinna has found a better teacher, a master who is better capable of controlling his lover than Ovid. That is, not only could

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<sup>101</sup> Booth (1991) 121.



this rival be more skilled in the art of love, but more apt at controlling Corinna (*illa nisi in lecto nusquam potuere doceri*, 61). Words such as *docui* (55), *addidicisse* (56), *doceri* (61), and *magister* (62) are evidence of this education, which is alarming for Ovid. As a result, Ovid's anger is more pronounced because he is undermined by Corinna's faithlessness to him as failed lover and teacher of love.

Even Ovid's anger proves to be impotent (*ut faciem vidi, fortes cecidere lacerti*, 47). When he does have the chance to express his anger, Corinna's beauty disarms him, literally. Perhaps this could be another Menelaus-like side of Ovid's *persona*. In Euripides' *Andromache*, Peleus rebukes Menelaus for taking Helen back. He describes how Menelaus, intending to kill Helen during the sack of Troy, dropped his sword upon seeing Helen—or rather, her breasts.<sup>102</sup> Here we have a connection of intended violence with sexual arousal.<sup>103</sup> Kennedy explains that

Elegy describes 'love' in terms also used to describe 'war' in a society frequently represented these days as obsessed with militarism, and thus raises similarly open-ended questions of ideological analysis which have been much discussed in recent work. I stress open-ended, for elegy is always open—inevitably open—to appropriation to represent ideological positions in the present, the more persuasive of which will succeed temporarily in imposing their rhetoric of reality and truth. Inscribed in this rhetoric is the theory of metaphor itself which provides a seemingly objective rationale for privileging certain terms like 'conquest' as *really* describing 'war' rather than 'love' or *vice versa*.<sup>104</sup>

And Cahoon notes that Ovid's "manipulation of military imagery goes beyond Propertius' not only because it is funnier, but also because it suggests that the love of the *Amores* is inherently violent and linked with the Roman *libido dominandi*."<sup>105</sup> She

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<sup>102</sup> See Euripides *Andromache* 629-31.

<sup>103</sup> Miller (2002) 258, cf. *Am.* 1.5.13-6. See also Kennedy (1993), which uses *Amores* 1.7 as an example.

<sup>104</sup> Kennedy (1993) 57.

<sup>105</sup> Cahoon (1988) 293-4.

also posits that in *Amores* 2.5 Ovid views Corinna's grief as sexually attractive. Ovid feels no sympathy or sorrow, only lust.<sup>106</sup>

The lover (Ovid) melts into kisses with Corinna, forgetting his anger. Thus we see Ovid transition from *saevus*, savage, to *supplex*, a suppliant, a word inappropriately used in the context of this poem. The same inappropriate use can be said of the reference to Jupiter, which Miller (2002) 258 describes as having "slapstick quality." In many other poems of the *Amores* (e.g., *Amores* 1.3) Ovid uses Jupiter as and his many numerous lust-driven metamorphoses as a role model. Davis notes that

the recurrence of Jupiter in the role of protean lover is meant to be thematic in the *Amores* is strongly suggested by the fact that neither Propertius nor Tibullus use Jupiter this way. ... A review of the occurrences of Jupiter and his disguises in the *Amores* reveals the ingenuity with which Ovid uses the god as a paradigm for the successful philanderer. ... Ovid's amusing reference to Love's ability to turn the lover, even Jove, into whatever he pleases should warn the reader that the transformation and disguise play an important role in the poem, and indeed they do.<sup>107</sup>

Words such as *saevus*, *supplex*, and *lovi* are the related to the desired undermining effect the rival has on Ovid. But we should not expect the rival to hold all the cards; Ovid is undermined just enough but does not give the rival complete power: the rival is not present and has a non-speaking role.

The presence of the rival also complicates Corinna's *persona*. In *Amores* 1.4, the *puella* (Corinna?) was compared to Hippodameia, a myth including violent abduction, locked away by the dubious *vir*, and then forced by Ovid to lie about her sexual encounters. In *Amores* 2.5, Corinna (*puella*?) has control over Ovid, is described using layered similes and *exempla*, and learns even more tricks from a *magister* who

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<sup>106</sup> Cahoon (1988) 297.

<sup>107</sup> Davis (1989) 72-3.

has a *grand pretium*. Upon considering Ovidian lover(s) in both *Amores* 1.4 and 2.5, we, the audience, are unable to discern whether the *puella* and Corinna, respectively, should be interpreted as synonymous characters. Either way, the *persona* of the Ovid's female lover becomes more complicated and unstable because the readers are themselves uncertain of recognizing her. Along with vague descriptions of both lovers Ovid makes it difficult for us to draw a mental picture of her.

It is the mistress who appears to be more in control of this situation—at least more so than in *Amores* 1.4. She doesn't seem to be pinned in the middle this time. Corinna may not be locked away by a possessive *vir* or controlled by Ovid in her denials, but she is still manipulated by Ovid in his poetry: he paints her the way he wants the audience to view her. In the end of the poem, the inversion of roles is complete: Ovid has become the *vir* from *Amores* 1.4 and the rival has become the master. And legally speaking, Ovid—as advocate—has proven that in the beginning of the poem he saw Corinna kissing the rival and in the end he learns by her kisses that are too good to believe must have been learned from another *magister amoris*. We could even view this rival as another elegiac lover competing for Corinna. The only problem is that in Ovid's poetry, this rival will not have a voice. But I have been arguing that the main role of the rival is to remain obscure and to destabilize the acting *personae*.

### **V. More Uncertainty**

The confusion of the rival's identity and the role-inversion of all the characters in *Amores* 2.5 perhaps betray Ovid's awareness of the presence of the reader as well.

That is, he is being purposely vague in setting the scene for us. The more vague the language seems, especially with all of the words connected to seeing and color, the more the poem acquires a dream-like effect. Or are we readers yet further rivals? Does Ovid immediately change the scene to confuse us? Perhaps *Amores* 3.12.5-11 could clarify:

*quae modo dicta mea est, quam coepi solus amare,     5*  
*cum multis vereor ne sit habenda mihi.*  
*fallimur, an nostris innotuit illa libellis?*  
*sic erit: ingenio prostitit illa meo.*  
*et merito: quid enim formae praeconia feci?*  
*vendibilis culpa facta puella mea est.                     10*  
*me lenone placet ...*

She who was once said to be mine, whom I alone began to love,  
 along with many others I fear that she might not be possessed by me.  
 Am I mistaken, or has that woman become known from my books?  
 So that's how it'll be: she'll be prostituted by my talent.  
 And that's what I get! Indeed, didn't I choose to advertise her beauty?  
 The fault is mine – the girl's been made marketable.  
 I was happy to be the pimp ...

Corinna has been literarily prostituted by Ovid, and as a result the audience knows her and can see her too. Ovid, the literary procurer, calls attention to the audience's presence and expresses some regret at the end of *Amores* 3.12. Instead of showing the same directness in *Amores* 2.5, Ovid indirectly describes his condition with Corinna, depending heavily on descriptive language and words, specifically visual. In *Amores* 2.5, some form of the word *video* is the most repeated word that can be found in this poem (e.g., in lines 13, 15, 19, 23, 36, 47). A great deal of the sight language is embedded within the scenes where Ovid, as spectator, recognizes the secret loves tricks used by Corinna and the rival—the very same ones taught by Ovid in *Amores* 1.4. The second set of sight language occurs in the complex similes, used to

describe Corinna's guilty blush, which Ovid lists in lines 35-40: *purpureus* (34), *coloratum caelum* (35), *subrupet ... sponso visa puella novo* (36), *rosae fulgent inter sua lilia mixtae* (37), *flavescere* (39), and *tinxit, Assyrium ebur* (40). Ovid uses *purpureus* to describe Corinna's actual blush, while the similes do not include actual colors; instead they are implied and allow the reader to imagine the intensity of her blush. After Ovid's angry discovery of Corinna's treachery, he uses *specto* twice (*spectabat...spectare*, 44) and *vultu* with *maesta* (45). Yet when Ovid beholds her beauty (*vidi faciem*, 47), he forgets his anger. The sight language ends there. The reason for so much sight language in this poem is because Ovid plays the passive spectator, until he discovers the truth. This language, whether dealing with color or vision, can be layered, and may perhaps be a reflection of the complexity of the *personae* themselves. All this looking only results in paranoia, which Ovid dutifully describes to the audience in the very end of his poem.

What may also pose one last problem upon reading this poem is the use of the royal "we," which is common in elegiac poetry. Since many translations of *noster/nos* and its other forms as "me," "I," etc., we forget. Could Ovid's use of the pronoun have anything to do with the complexity of Ovid's poetic identity or psychological condition in this poem? Perhaps it involves both. The mask falls to reveal the poet's true craft when we see Ovid changing from singular pronouns to plural ones. Does this indicate a confusion of *personae*? Not so. Changing from singular to plural pronouns is a reflection of Ovid's passive and active roles. In the beginning he uses pronouns such as *mihi* (2, 4, 24, 31) and *mea* (3, 8, 29, 30) to describe his passive

experiences and watching (i.e., his torture at seeing Corinna using with another the tricks he taught her). Near the middle of the poem (after Ovid's objection to Corinna kissing another), Ovid uses pronouns such as *nostra* (48), *nobis* (50), and *nostris... nostra* (58). The use of *nostris* is impersonal,<sup>108</sup> suggesting that this word expresses action without attribution to a definite subject (i.e., Ovid's way of not betraying himself by including more personal information about himself). These are experiences Ovid chooses to give the poem a more public aspect. This also applies to Corinna herself. The use of the noted plural pronouns do not coincidentally involve the *puella*. In line 48, his girl (*nostra*) is defended by her own arms. Ovid, after declaring himself a suppliant, begs her for forgiveness lest she give him (*nobis*) worse kisses in line 50. And in line 58, as Corinna and Ovid are kissing, their tongues entwine (*nostris... nostra*). Could the "we" indicate the possession of the girl? The audience's possession of her? Everyone's? The use of these pronouns may again evoke the passage from 3.12.5-11 (see above), where Ovid has regrettably endowed the *puella* with fame, which sparks his poetic genius, and even comes as a benefit to the audience as well.

In comparison with *Amores* 1.4, the characters in *Amores* 2.5 (Ovid the tortured lover, Corinna, the rival) all shift and are shown to be just as unstable, if not more so. The presence of the rival and Corinna's infidelity are troublesome; Ovid's use of language and complex similes reveal this. What the poet may be suggesting

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<sup>108</sup> I discovered this in Ancona and Greene (2005) 63, which originally addresses Propertius' (2.1.1-4) poetry. But I thought that their explanation of *mihi* being passive and *nostris* as impersonal could apply to *Amores* 2.5 as well.

here is that infidelity, or unstable relationships, is what keeps his own game of love worthy of writing about in his elegies. Corinna, the rival, even the audience, are merely pawns as Ovid, master player, moves the pieces to make his victory all the more satisfying. We learn through these poems that his intended goal is ultimate success as a poet. The tortured lover laments, “Why’s my story so good?” This is what lures readers in; a poem about a distressed *amator* who experiences plenty of backfiring in his relationship with Corinna (and possibly other women). Yet this is what makes it an entertaining spectacle: in a way, it is another form of self-deprecation, not uncommon in both recent and not-so-recent books, films, etc. The vacillation of Ovid’s emotions, from anger to distress to love and so on, is what makes his poetry timeless, yet complex.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

In *Amores* 1.4, unstable *personae* were first presented. Ovid is the *praeceptor amoris*, tortured lover, and poet. The *puella* and *vir* star as mysterious identities<sup>109</sup> and have just as mysterious liaisons (with each other and with Ovid). The Hippodameia *exemplum* is itself unstable, and could have conflated the two myths (of Hippodameia). Such an inconsistently portrayed mythological *exemplum* results in a confusion of readers' attempts in defining Ovid's identity and role even within the poem itself. The main reference to the centaur (an *ambiguus vir*) and the male mythical characters who are ambiguous are analogous to Ovid as an ambiguous man as well. And the possible implication of a reference to a second Hippodameia myth reinforces the first myth and shows that both Hippodameia characters are associated with attempted and unsuccessful rape. This example complicates Ovid's thoughts of violently abducting the *puella*. His "seeing" and not seeing lead to Ovid's separateness from the girl and his frustration at what he is not seeing (*aspiciam*, 4.4, 41-2). The word *videor* (1.4.10) is a result of Ovid's control of the narrative. Seeing and seeming language invokes the realism of the narrator-poet-Ovid, the complexity of the *personae* themselves and their relationships. The presence of the unstable rival is always troublesome and further unsettles the other characters in this poem. Erotic language and double entendres also continue to subvert the *personae*, including the

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<sup>109</sup> I.e., ambiguous terms are used to describe secondary characters. This results in uncertainty of readers in determining if they are lovers, girlfriends, wives, partners, husbands, etc.



*puella*, who in this poem appears to be controlled by the *vir* and Ovid, but ambiguously so (i.e., there are instances in which both the *vir*'s and Ovid's ambitions are undermined because of their rivalry).

The *personae* in *Amores* 2.5 are equally unstable. Ovid shows again his vacillating and ambivalent feelings for another *puella*, who is assumedly Corinna. Ovid plays the angry spectator, or perhaps even an angry *vir*-like character who attempts to claim the *puella* as his property. His legal vocabulary describes her thus, when he speaks as an advocate who laments that his case is so good (2.5.8). Enmeshed with his frustrated gaze are multiple, layered, complex *exempla* and similes. Great epic works such as the *Aeneid* and the *Iliad* have even influenced some of them. However, Ovid takes the heroic and makes it absurd, thus further complicating Corinna's identity and undermining his own role of lover, teacher, and even poet. In addition, visual language (color, brightness, etc.) dominates *Amores* 2.5, which is the result, of course, of Ovid's spectatorship (cf. the seeing and seeing of 1.4). Then there is also the presence and mysterious disappearance of an unnamed rival, who only exacerbates Ovid's impotent anger. Corinna appears as a character in this poem who is perhaps more controlling than in *Amores* 1.4. By the end of the poem, Ovid has succeeded in bringing about a complete role inversion of all the characters in this poem, much like (or more so than in?) in *Amores* 1.4.

As skilled poet, Ovid crafts multifaceted and unstable *personae* to suit all of his *Amores*. For example, in *Amores* 1.8, Ovid uses Dipsas, a procuress, as a mouthpiece, who adopts the role of *praeceptor amoris* to educate the *puella* in the arts of

deception. In doing so, Ovid undermines and complicates his previous role of *praeceptor amoris* in *Amores* 1.4. As a result of this role-inversion, Ovid once more becomes the passive spectator, as in *Amores* 2.5.

If one reads from poem to poem, one could view how unstable *personae* contribute to ways in which the poet's attitude towards poetry, people, love, etc. changes and even how these elements culminate in his poetic identity. Not only are the *personae* unstable, but their relationships are as well. For example, Ovid changes constantly from teacher to tortured lover to teacher and so on throughout *Amores*, and quite often even in one poem. With the unbalanced characters and relationships, Ovid's poetic identity becomes much more complex than the original idea of an elegiac lover.

Tibullus and Propertius experimented with elegy much in their own right. In the first book of his elegies, Tibullus did not write only of his love affair with a girl named Delia, but also with a boy, Marathus. Nemesis takes the place of Delia in his second book. And in his poetry, Tibullus pines in his own poetry for the idyllic refuge of the countryside and does not seem to focus on his poetic glory as Ovid does in his. Then there is Propertius, who, in the fourth book of his elegies (much shorter than the other books, which could have possibly been cut short by his unexpected death), moves beyond his love affair with Cynthia to include many etiological poems about Roman monuments and rituals.

To boost his own status as elegiac poet, Ovid had to experiment with something larger. Ovid made his own innovations to the short-lived genre of Latin

love elegy by experimenting with his own poetic identity, seen through the many unstable *personae*. Like Propertius and Tibullus, Ovid is the tortured lover, the teacher, and the poet. Yet Ovid's ability to make these characters complex and unstable enough to betray an awareness of his readers brings an even greater innovativeness and creativity to his poetry. His poetic identity is the coalescence of his scripted characters (*personae*). And it is this that pushes traditional subjective elegy beyond its limits. Ovid propels the shifting roles of these characters to lead to greater and perhaps even more if not just as complex ideas of love, beauty, poetry, etc. Ovid is able to subvert and complicate the role and identity of the poet, rival, *puella*, and lover in order to experiment with the conventions of elegy to extend it.

There is an advantage in considering the instability of Ovid's *personae*. Upon comparing the *Amores* to the *Metamorphoses*, one of Ovid's latest works, one can see the same sort of tropes: there is change, instability, consequences from seeing too much, love triangles, rivals, suffering lovers, etc. Even in the *Heroides*, *Ars Amatoria*, and *Fasti* too can some of these tropes be found.<sup>110</sup> And, most importantly, as for the glory of the poet (i.e., the concern of poetic identity that pervades much of Ovid's poetry), which Ovid made known to us in his *Amores*, Ovid tells us something similar in the Envoi of *Metamorphoses*:

*lamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis  
nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.  
cum volet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius  
ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi;  
parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis* 875

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<sup>110</sup> For more on this subject see Boyd's (1997) chapter 6 "Legisse Voluptas: Some Thoughts on the Future of Ovid's *Amores*." Or see chapter 6, "The Future of Love," of Armstrong (2005). For more on the reception of the *Amores* from antiquity up to Shakespeare, cf. Stapleton (1996).

*astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum;  
quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris  
ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama  
(si quid habent veri vatum praesagia) vivam.*<sup>111</sup>

And now I've finished my work, which neither the anger of Jove, nor fire,  
nor iron, nor insatiable old age cannot destroy.  
When it will, let that day, which has no power except over this body of mine,  
end my duration of uncertain time of life:  
and yet, the better part of me shall be born, immortal,  
high above the lofty stars, and my name will be deathless,  
to wherever conquered lands Rome's sway extends,  
I shall be spoken on people's lips, with fame through all the ages,  
if prophecies of poets hold some truth: *I shall live.*

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<sup>111</sup> 15.871-879 from Tarrant's (2004) OCT.

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